

**DELL**  
**FIRST**  
**EDITION**  
B110

The Anthology of the Year

35¢

**SF**

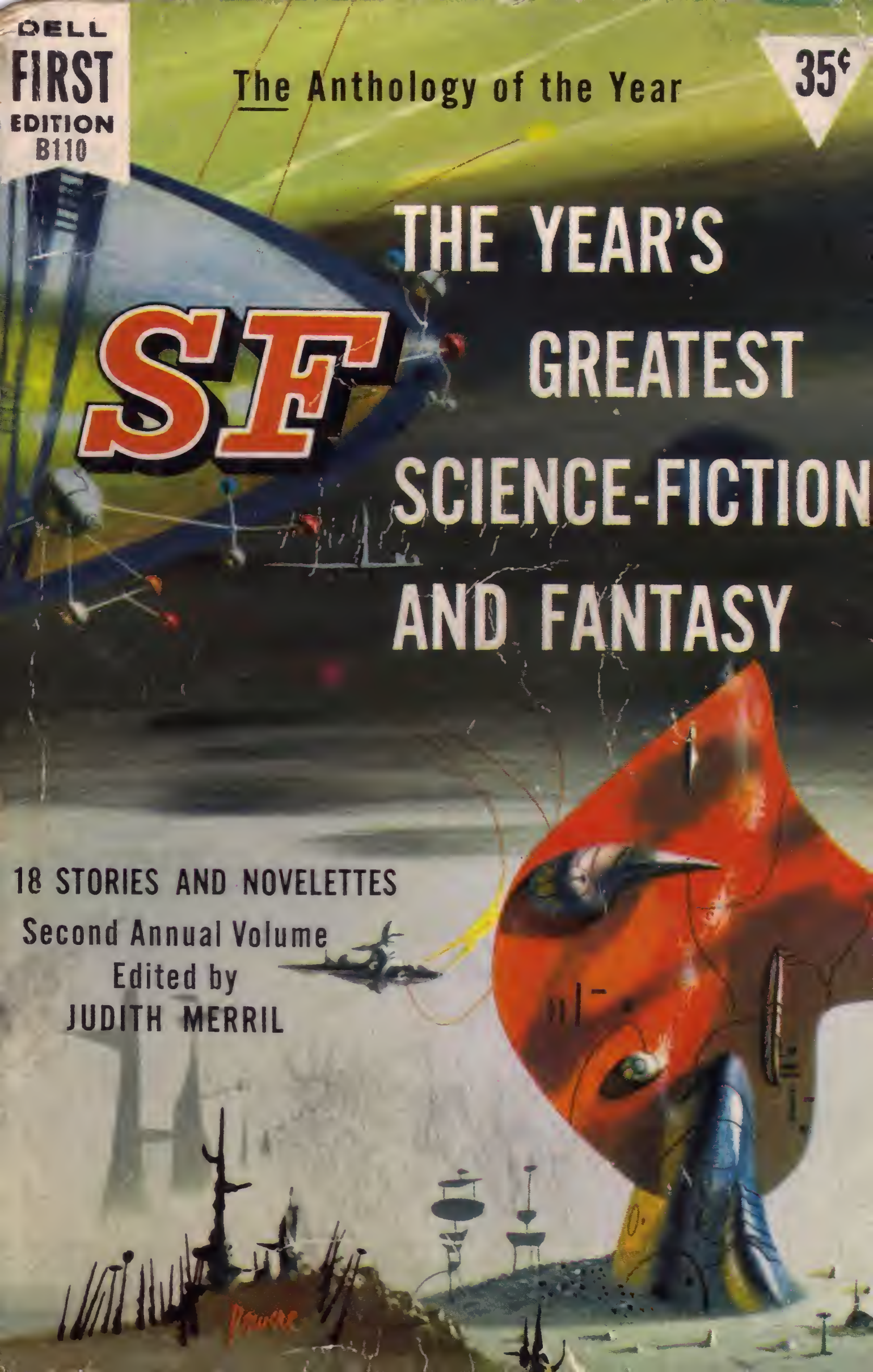
**THE YEAR'S  
GREATEST  
SCIENCE-FICTION  
AND FANTASY**

**18 STORIES AND NOVELETTES**

**Second Annual Volume**

**Edited by**

**JUDITH MERRIL**



A.R. Lutman  
3509 S. Toledo  
Tulsa, Okla

R: 76929

## THE YEAR'S GREATEST

This is the Second Annual Volume  
. . . Here's what the critics had to say  
about the first:

"The definitive 'Best' . . . modern s.f. at its most  
widely appealing."

—N.Y. Herald Tribune

"An expertly selected collection of 18 adult,  
imaginative stories."

—Oakland Tribune

". . . an unusually fine volume, even by Miss Mer-  
ril's standards."

—Anthony Boucher

"Science fiction fans have a treat in store."

—Hartford Courant

"The best anthologist in the business today. If  
the numbers to come are only half as good as  
this, Miss Merrill will be editing forever."

—American Book Collector



**ST**

**THE YEAR'S  
GREATEST  
SCIENCE-FICTION  
and FANTASY**

**SECOND ANNUAL VOLUME**

**Edited by  
JUDITH MERRIL**

**A DELL FIRST EDITION**



Published by  
DELL PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
261 Fifth Avenue  
New York 16, N. Y.

© Copyright, 1957, by Judith Merrill

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 56-8938

Published jointly with The Gnome Press, Inc.

Designed and produced by  
Western Printing & Lithographing Company

Cover painting by Richard Powers

First printing—June, 1957

Printed in U.S.A.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** The following selections in this anthology are reprinted by permission of the authors and/or their publishers.

THE MAN WHO LIKED LIONS by John Bernard Daley; © 1956, by Royal Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

THE COSMIC EXPENSE ACCOUNT by C. M. Kornbluth; © 1955, by Fantasy House, Inc. Reprinted from *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: Sixth Series* (Doubleday, 1957). By permission of the Author and of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

THE FAR LOOK by Theodore L. Thomas; © 1956, by Street and Smith Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

WHEN GRANDFATHER FLEW TO THE MOON by E. L. Malpass. By permission of the Author.

THE DOORSTOP by R. Bretnor; © 1956, by Street and Smith Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

SILENT BROTHER by Algis Budrys; © 1956, by Street and Smith Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

STRANGER STATION by Damon Knight; © 1956, by Fantasy House, Inc. By permission of the Author.

EACH AN EXPLORER by Isaac Asimov; © 1956, by Columbia Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

ALL ABOUT "THE THING" by Randall Garrett; © 1956, by Columbia Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER, THEY SPELL MONSTER by Ray Russell; © 1956, by HMH Publishing Co., Inc. By permission of the Author.

DIGGING THE WEANS by Robert Nathan; © 1956, by Harper & Brothers. By permission of the Author.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH by Roger Thorne; © 1956, by Reynard Publications Corporation. By permission of the Author.

GRANDMA'S LIE SOAP by Robert Abernathy; © 1955, by King-Size Publications, Inc. By permission of the Author.

COMPOUNDED INTEREST by Mack Reynolds; © 1956, by Fantasy House, Inc. By permission of the Author.

PRIMA BELLADONNA by J. G. Ballard. By permission of the Author.

THE OTHER MAN by Theodore Sturgeon; © 1956, by Galaxy Publishing Corp. By permission of the Author.

THE DAMNÉDEST THING by Garson Kanin; © 1956, by Esquire, Inc. Reprinted from *Esquire*, February 1956. By permission of the Author.

ANYTHING BOX by Zenna Henderson; © 1956, by Fantasy House, Inc. By permission of the Author.



## CONTENTS

- THE MAN WHO LIKED LIONS 9  
by John Bernard Daley  
from *Infinity Science Fiction*
- THE COSMIC EXPENSE ACCOUNT 25  
by C. M. Kornbluth  
from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*
- THE FAR LOOK 51  
by Theodore L. Thomas  
from *Astounding Science Fiction*
- WHEN GRANDFATHER FLEW TO THE MOON 81  
by E. L. Malpass  
from *Maclean's Magazine*
- THE DOORSTOP 88  
by R. Bretnor  
from *Astounding Science Fiction*
- SILENT BROTHER 98  
by Algis Budrys  
from *Astounding Science Fiction*
- STRANGER STATION 119  
by Damon Knight  
from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*
- EACH AN EXPLORER 146  
by Isaac Asimov  
from *Future Science Fiction*

- ALL ABOUT "THE THING" 161  
by Randall Garrett  
from *Science Fiction Stories*
- PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER, THEY SPELL MONSTER 164  
by Ray Russell  
from *Playboy*
- DIGGING THE WEANS 173  
by Robert Nathan  
from *Harper's Magazine*
- TAKE A DEEP BREATH 181  
by Roger Thorne  
from *Tiger*
- GRANDMA'S LIE SOAP 187  
by Robert Abernathy  
from *Fantastic Universe*
- COMPOUNDED INTEREST 206  
by Mack Reynolds  
from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*
- PRIMA BELLADONNA 220  
by J. G. Ballard  
from *Science Fantasy*
- THE OTHER MAN 235  
by Theodore Sturgeon  
from *Galaxy Science Fiction*
- THE DAMNEDEST THING 290  
by Garson Kanin  
from *Esquire*
- ANYTHING BOX 298  
by Zenna Henderson  
from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*
- THE YEAR'S S-F 313  
Summation and Honorable Mention  
by Judith Merrill





# THE MAN WHO LIKED LIONS

by John Bernard Daley

"You mean you get *paid* for reading that stuff?" goes the refrain.

I do. And every time I start a new collection, the idea that reading all those stories could be called work seems absurd and wonderful, even to me. It isn't till somewhere along in the seventieth magazine, maybe halfway through the full year's s-f crop, that I even begin to feel I'm earning my pay. But don't get me wrong. I love anthologizing. . . .

Maybe it's just that it feels so great when you find a good one—and of course this is even more true when the story is by a new and unknown author.

I was suspicious when I finished *Lions*, though. Too smooth for a beginner, I thought, and—last time this happened, it turned out to be a pen-name for Algis Budrys. So I wrote cautiously inquiring to the editor of *Infinity*, who answered, "John Bernard Daley is not John Bernard Daley at all; he is Bernard John Daley, and this is not his first story; it is his second. . . ."

MR. KEMPER leaned on the rail, watching the caged lions asleep in the August sun. At his side a woman lifted a whimpering little girl to her shoulder and said, "Stop that! Look at the lions!" Then she jiggled the girl up and down. The lion opened yellow eyes, lifted his head from between his paws and yawned. Immediately the girl put her fingers over her face and began to cry. "Shut up!" said the woman. "You shut up right now or I'll tell that big lion to eat you up!" Looking through her fingers, the girl said, "Lions don't eat little girls." The woman shook her. "Of course they do! I said they did, didn't I?"



"Lions seldom eat people," said Mr. Kemper. With all of her two hundred pounds the woman turned to face him. "Well!" she said. The word hung like an icicle in the warm air, but Mr. Kemper waved it aside. "Only old lions resort to human flesh. Except for the famous incident of the Tsavo man-eaters, of course." The woman pulled her arm tighter around the girl, elbow up, as if to ward him off. "Come on, Shirl," she said. "Let's go look at the taggers." And with a warning look over her shoulder she lunged away from the rail. A big man with an unlit cigarette in his mouth took her place.

As her wide back swayed down the walk, Mr. Kemper wondered if she had a special intuition about him, like dogs, whose noses warned them that he was not quite the kind of man they were accustomed to. Women, particularly those with children, seemed to feel that way. He watched her leave, having decided that she was unsuited for what he had in mind.

Two things happened simultaneously, interrupting his thoughts. The big man beside him tapped him on the shoulder and asked him for a match; at the same time Kemper saw, just beyond the retreating woman, a man in a tweed jacket and gray slacks, watching him. For a second they stared at each other and Kemper felt a mind-probe dart swiftly against his shield. He tightened the shield and waited. The man was heavily tanned, like Kemper, with unusually wide eyes and a dolichocephalic head. He had remarkable cheekbones; they appeared to slant forward toward the middle of his face, which was very narrow and long in the jaw. He looked a lot like Mr. Kemper, the way one Caucasian looks like another to an Eskimo. His glance swerved from Kemper to the lion cage; then he turned his back, a little too casually. Breath hissed softly from between Mr. Kemper's teeth.

The big man said, "Hey, buddy, I asked do you have a match?"

"What? No, I don't smoke." His thoughts racing, he faced the lion cage. The tanned man had turned away, obviously not wanting to contact him, but why? He knew who Kemper



was; there was no doubt of that. Frowning slightly, Mr. Kemper looked at the chewed hunks of horsemeat and bone on the cage floor, and the vibrating flies. The only logical answer was that the man was waiting for reinforcements. Even now he was probably contacting the Three Councils. Still, that gave Kemper a reasonable chance; it took a while for even the most powerful minds to move along the pathways of time. Beside him the big man was talking again. "You feel okay, pal? You looked kind of far away there all of a sudden. Maybe you oughta go over in the shade."

"Not at all. I was only thinking of something."

"Yeah?" The man took the cigarette from his mouth and put it in his shirt pocket. "Say, I heard you telling that broad there lions don't eat people. You sure about that?"

"Quite sure. Look at them. Do you think they need to depend on anything as slow as Homo Sapiens for food?" With another part of his brain he wondered how many men would be sent to take him back. There was one point in his favor, however. He had nothing to lose.

"I don't know, pal. All I ever see them do is sleep. Always laying on their fat backs, like now."

"Well, that's not unusual. Lions sleep in the daytime and hunt at night."

"Yeah? What the hell good is that? The zoo closes at 5:30, don't it?"

Kemper looked at him dispassionately. He thought: "You fool, what would you say if you knew that you were talking to a man who hunted your ape ancestors through the forests of a million years ago? Could your pigmy brain accept that?"

The man jabbed him on the shoulder again. "Look at that big one with the black streaks in his hair. Ain't he something? Why don't he jump around in there like the chimps do?"

"Maybe he doesn't know it's expected of him," Kemper answered, hoping that the arrival of the man in the tweed jacket would not affect his sport of the moment.

"You know, I'd like to see a couple of those babies mixing it up. Like the lion against the tiger, maybe. Who do you think would win a hassle like that, anyway?"



"The lion," Mr. Kemper said. He decided that the game would go on; an idea was beginning to scratch at the corners of his mind. Looking around with what he hoped was a conspiratorial air, he jabbed his elbow into the big man's stomach. "Listen, you'd like to see some action, would you? Suppose you be here in say—two hours. At three o'clock."

"Yeah? What kind of action? You ain't trying to kid me, are you, buddy?"

Shrugging, Mr. Kemper looked at the flies swarming in the cage. "It's just a tip. Take it or leave it, buddy." He turned, brushed by the scowling man, and left the rail. Although it was getting hotter he walked down the cement in the sun, avoiding the shade of the tall hedges opposite the row of cages. He went toward the stairway that lifted from the lion court to the terrace where the central zoo building stood. Behind the building was the main enclosure; the zoo itself was terraced along two hillsides, with more hills in the distance. It was not a large zoo, nor was it a good place to hide. But Mr. Kemper did not intend to hide.

In the cages he passed were other cats: cheetahs, leopards, puma and tigers, lying with heaving flanks, or lolling red-tongued on the stone floors. They hadn't changed too much, he decided, except in size. Even the streak-maned lion was puny in comparison with the lions that Kemper had known. He walked up to the drinking fountain by the stairway, the sun in his face. He was almost tempted to stare contemptuously up at it. Bending over the fountain, he caught the dusty smell of the cats among popcorn, rootbeer and ice cream smells and the sweat stink of people. He straightened, wiping his lips, and remembered the somber jungles of the Pliocene, black-green in the sun that was a fist against your head; the plains of javelin-tall, yellow grass swinging to the horizon; and in the hills the lions with hides like hammered brass, the deadly, roaring lions. He remembered too, with the smell of those lions thick as dust in his mouth, the cities of his people, the proud people who had discovered the secrets of time through the science of their minds, a science unknown to the world he was in now. He looked up slowly



and saw the man in the tweed jacket standing at the top of the stairway.

When their eyes met, Kemper probed with an arrow-swift thought but the other had his mind-shield up. The man turned and moved behind a group of women. The man was gone when Kemper got to the top of the steps. "So that's the way you want it," he said, looking around. Two sidewalks led from the stair top; one went up the hill to the aviary, the other around the south wing of the building. He took the one that rounded the wing. "I doubt," he said, "if we'll play peek-a-boo all afternoon, however." An old lady twitching along the walk gave him a nasty look as he passed.

He went by the zebra corral where a small boy was picking up stones and turned into the side entrance of the wing. He went down the dim corridor, turned left at the men's room, then right and left again, and came finally to a small yard partially hidden from the main enclosure by an extension of the wing. In the yard was only one exhibit, a beaver pool surrounded by a waist-high stone wall. Two teen-aged boys sprawled on the wall; otherwise the place was deserted. Mr. Kemper studied the boys. Here was game to his liking. He went over and sat down on a bench in the sun.

The boys, twins, in Levi's, saddle-shoes, T-shirts and long hair, leaned over the pool. There was something odd about the actions of the blond one who tilted dangerously near the water. He moved, spasmodically, and Mr. Kemper saw the flicker of sunlight on the long stick held like a spear in his hand and heard a splash. Cursing, the boy pushed himself upright and dropped from the wall, shaking water from the stick. "You missed," said the other one.

"I'll show that flat-tailed rat," said the blond boy. From a back pocket he took a clasp-knife and snapped it open, and from a side pocket a length of twine. With swift, vicious twists he started to tie the knife-handle to the end of the stick. He made two knots and said, "Man, look at that. That'll hold it, man."

"What about the cat on the bench over there? What if he sees us?"



"Him? So what if he does? We can handle him. Anyway, he's got his eyes shut, ain't he?"

The sun tingled on the tops of Mr. Kemper's ears as he listened, his eyes half-shut. "Okay, give me lots of room on the wall," the blond boy said. There was a rasping of cloth on stone. Then Mr. Kemper closed his eyes and made a picture in the darkness of his mind, a small, bright picture that he blotted out immediately after it was formed. By the pool, metal clattered on stone.

The blond boy yelled, "Hey, what'd you shove me for? Look what you did!"

"I never touched you, you jerk!"

"The hell you didn't. Look at that damn knife!"

Opening his eyes, Mr. Kemper looked at the pieces of knife blade scattered at the boy's feet and, a little to one side, the broken stick. He smiled and settled back on the bench, listening to the argument. The boys shouted and waved their arms, but that was all. As for their invective, he felt it lacked originality; he tired of it quickly. He got up from the bench and walked toward them. The argument stopped.

They looked at him with cold, arrogant eyes. "Hello," he said.

They looked away. "You hear something, man?" said the blond boy.

"Not a thing, Jack, not a thing," the other answered.

The smile on Mr. Kemper's face was his best, his friendliest; it had taken him hours of practice in front of mirrors. "*Apes, your fathers were not arrogant when they died screaming on our spears. They were not bold when our hunting cats ripped their bellies.*" Aloud he said, "You know, I'm a stranger around here and I thought you might be able to help me. Just what is it that's going on at the lion cage at three o'clock today?"

"We ain't heard nothing about no lion's cage, dad. We got our own troubles."

"Yeah, our own troubles. Get lost, dad."

"It sounded very interesting, something about a big hassle in the cages."

The boys lifted their eyebrows and looked sidelong at



each other. The blond one said, "I told you to get lost, dad. Take five. You know, depart away from here."

Mr. Kemper said, "Well, thanks anyway," and was still smiling as he left them.

It was hotter when he reached the main enclosure, but still cool by his standards. At a refreshment stand he ordered a hot dog with mustard. As he waited, leaning against the counter, he saw the man in the tweed jacket among a group of people walking toward the elephant yard. He paid for the hot dog, picked it up, and walked along the path, keeping the jacket in sight.

The man in tweed went by the elephants, past the giraffes and the zebras, then around the south wing of the building. Up the walk toward the aviary he went, with Kemper not too far behind. At the top of the hill the man stopped in front of the aviary. It was a wide enclosure fenced by bars thirty feet high. In the larger section were the myriad ducks, cranes, gulls and other harmless birds; walled off from these were eagles, vultures, and condors squatting on carved balconies. From the hilltop there was a fine view of the zoo grounds below. The man in the tweed jacket turned, apparently to look down the hill, but instead looked squarely at Mr. Kemper standing a few feet away.

Neither of them said anything. The man in tweed seemed embarrassed. Mr. Kemper took a bite of the hot dog and chewed reflectively. After a while he said, "I suppose I ought to recognize you, but I don't. Council of Science, no doubt."

The man answered stiffly: "Ulbasar, of the First Science Council. Lord Kjem, you are under arrest."

"You'd better use words; it's less liable to make anyone suspicious. You might have dressed a little more intelligently, too."

Ulbasar ran his hand over his jacket lapels. "But it's cold. How do you stand it in that light shirt?"

"Very simple; I'm wearing long underwear."

"Well, you've obviously been here much longer than I have."

"Yes," said Kemper. "I've been here quite a while."



They didn't speak again for several minutes. In front of them some girls pressed against the mesh screen that reinforced the bars, eyeing a pompous small duck. "Let's go," said one of the girls. "These birds are too disgusting. I mean, they're so ugly!"

"She thinks the birds are ugly," said Mr. Kemper. Laughing, he turned to Ulbasar. "Well, what do you think of the scavenging little ape of our marshland now?"

Ulbasar shook his head. "Incredible. Thoroughly incredible."

Mr. Kemper said, "Look at them. They laugh at the birds, they laugh at the monkeys; I have even seen some of them laughing at the lions." He scanned the people at the bars, the sweaty men with crooked noses, sagging bellies, bald heads and hairy arms. There were women in shorts, gray women whose legs pillared up to fearsome, rolling buttocks; girls with smeared mouths and rough-shaven legs and sandals strapped across their fat, wiggling toes. "The females are unbelievable," Kemper said, "but you should see the children."

He finished his hot dog and wiped his hands on his handkerchief. "Well, Ulbasar, where are the others?"

"Others? There are no others. I came alone."

Kemper, his eyes on the people at the cage, slowly folded his handkerchief. Without warning he flung the full force of his mind-probe at the man beside him. Ulbasar staggered and lurched to his left, throwing out a desperate block that was contemptuously brushed aside. Kemper reached out, gripped his arm, then eased the power of the probe. "Don't lie to me," he said softly. "It will take more than one of you to force me to go back; you know that. Now, where are the others?"

"Only one other," said Ulbasar, shaking his head. "Lord Gteris. He's on his way. None of the rest were close enough to contact."

"That's better. So they sent Gteris, eh? It's been a long time since Gteris and I hunted together, a very long time." He looked up as the condor on the highest perch spread its



wings and cocked its head toward the wire mesh roof of the cage.

Words burred from Ulbasar, who still looked shaken. "The Nobles demanded that Lord Gteris come. The Science Council insisted that only our men handle it, and they're considerably agitated. There's been open conflict between Nobles and Scientists at the Sessions, and the tribunal is worried. They want you returned, and they want you returned quickly."

"Politics, always politics," said Kemper, letting loose his grip on Ulbasar's arm.

"The Scientists are putting a lot of pressure on the tribunal. They feel there's danger to us each moment you spend here in the future. They're worried about the time-pattern."

"That's ridiculous. How can a man from the past affect the future? Besides, it isn't our future; it belongs to the ape-people."

"I know, but that makes no difference."

"I've been to their libraries. There are no records of us, unless you count some foolish legends of continents sinking into the sea." He looked at a man a few feet away who was throwing popcorn at a gull. A piece of popcorn bounced off the gull's head, and the man laughed. People standing near by laughed too, and the man pitched more popcorn. Sighing, Kemper looked at his wrist watch. "When is he coming?"

"I don't know, precisely, and that's the truth."

Kemper thought about it. It would take a while. After Gteris arrived there would be important details to occupy him, such as assimilating the manners and mores of this era and getting proper clothing. He said, "When he comes you'll have no trouble finding me. I won't leave the grounds; I give my word."

"The word of a renegade and a fugitive?" Ulbasar was himself again.

"The word of a Noble," said Kemper, turning away from him coldly.

"One thing more, Lord Kjem," Ulbasar said. "The time rift. We have orders to go back with you along the rift you



used, making certain that you seal it behind us. Is it close by?"

"That I will tell you when I have to," said Kemper, turning completely around this time and walking away.

Ulbasar would keep close watch on him, he knew, until Gteris came. That they intended to make him close his time rift made sense; the rift was dangerous to the over-all pattern. When he had left hastily he had forced his way through time with his mind-matrix, knowing that pursuit would have been swift if he had taken one of the normal time paths. The rift he had made was obvious, but would respond to no one but him. Others could accompany him through it, however, as he led the way. Gteris and Ulbasar could go with him and, controlling his mind, make him close the rift behind him.

So he walked briskly, knowing he had much to do in an uncertain amount of time. The sun was higher, pale in the glazed sky. Disheveled, harassed-looking people passed him, sweat stains dark on their clothes, and with them were fretful children. Mr. Kemper walked, and the people went by him, on their way to laugh at the monkeys, throw stones at the bears, and call "Kitty, kitty, kitty" to the leopards.

At a stand opposite the polar bears, near the north wing of the central building, he stopped to get a cup of coffee, but there was none for sale, so instead he bought a paper cup full of a green drink. He sipped it, watching a big white bear loafing in the pool. A little to one side of him a young man was arguing with a boy who wanted cotton candy. From below them, and to their right, came a low rumbling. "What's that, Daddy?" said the boy. "It's only the lions roaring," his father answered.

"They're not roaring, actually," said Mr. Kemper. "They're grunting, and clearing their throats."

The boy looked at Mr. Kemper with interest, but his father frowned. "It sounds like roaring to me," he said.

Mr. Kemper smiled at the boy. "Oh, no. If the lions were roaring you could hear nothing else. It's a sound you never forget, a sound that rips the wind and shakes the trees with thunder."



"I could forget it, Mac," said the counterman, leaning on his elbows and winking at the boy's father.

"I want to hear the lions roar," the boy said.

"For Pete's sake, what do you want? Make up your mind; do you want lions or cotton candy?" The boy's father looked exasperated.

"If you go to the lion cage at three o'clock today you'll hear them roar," Mr. Kemper said.

Shortly after that the young man dragged away his little boy, who was still insisting he wanted to hear the lions roar. Eventually, everyone who talked with Mr. Kemper went away rather suddenly. Mr. Kemper, unabashed, drank from his paper cup and thought about the ravages of time.

A woman and a man came around the corner of the building that faced the polar bears. The woman was red-faced, her voice a thin rasping. "All you want to do is watch those damn chips. You'd watch those chips all day if I didn't drag you away from there. Chips, chips, I'm sick of chips."

"Chimps," said Mr. Kemper as they went by. "Chimps, not chips. Chimps, lady, with an 'm' in it."

The counterman, moving toward him, wiped the counter with a soggy rag and said, "Listen, Mac, what's all this with the lions?"

Mr. Kemper looked at him. "Oh, do you like lions?"

"Well, it's like this," the counterman said. But he had no chance to finish. There was an animal shriek of pain from the other side of the building. The polar bears lifted their heads. Putting his unfinished drink on the counter, Mr. Kemper went toward the sound.

In the high cage that housed the chimpanzees, at the corner of the wing, a chimp swung violently on a trapeze, scolding at another on the cage floor. Kemper saw that the one on the trapeze was a female, the other a bigger, older male. The male, his face grotesque with anger, climbed the bars and got as close as he could to the trapeze. He hung there, grabbing at the female as she swung past just out of reach. There were only a few people near the cage, but most of them were smiling. One of them, a gangling, tall man, ran about pointing a camera first at the female, then the male. A lean



woman, possibly his wife, stood close to him. She put her hand on his arm. When Kemper saw her eyes he moved behind the others and went toward her and the man with the camera, taking a position a little to their right.

"Do it again, Al," the lank woman said. "Make them mad again." Al was sweating. He laughed, looked at the people around him, then pushed black hair from his forehead and handed her the camera. "Okay, okay," he said. "You get the shots now and don't goof it." He moved disjointedly, like a puppet, as close to the cage as he could, directly beneath the periphery of the trapeze's swinging arc.

He started to jiggle, then jumped up and down, making faces at the female. "Chee, chee!" he called. He danced, capering loosely, flapping long arms against his thighs. "Haaah, haaah, haaah," he yelled. "Haaah! Aargh!"

Angered, the female chattered at him. When the trapeze swung to the top of its arc she leaped and caught the cage bars, then dropped down them until she was only a few feet above the capering man. She screeched at him, pounding one hand against a bar, and the spectators laughed. On the opposite side of the cage the male chimp dropped to the floor and scuttled toward her. Stopping beneath her, he lifted his arms and growled low in his throat. She turned, snarling, and began to climb bars. With a last wild screech at the shouting, dancing man outside the cage she jumped, just as the male's fingers brushed her foot. Far over his head she went, then thumped to the floor. He dropped, and ran after her. She was climbing toward the trapeze again when he caught her. He sidled in, cuffing at her, then they grappled. A scream split the air as his teeth sank into her shoulder. Added now to the smells of popcorn, sweat and cotton candy was the smell of blood.

There was quiet in the cage and out of it as the female backed away from the hunched male. Unmolested, she climbed the bars slowly and swung to the trapeze, where she sat with one hand held to her bleeding shoulder. On the floor of the cage the male lifted both arms to her.

The spectators breathed again. "Did you get it?" said Al. "Did you? What a shot! Terrific, but terrific!"



"I got it, Al, I got it!" his wife said, eyes shining.

Mr. Kemper grinned at Al and shook his head admiringly. "Say, that was quite a performance." Still breathing hard, Al shoved his hair out of his eyes and returned the grin.

"Oh, Al's great," his wife said. "You ought to see him sometime at a party."

Mr. Kemper said, "He certainly does have talent."

"Ah, it's nothing," Al said. "Nothing to it, fella. You sure you got those shots, Baby?"

Moving closer, Mr. Kemper lowered his voice. "Listen, would you like to get some really terrific shots? Ones you'd remember all your life?"

Al looked at him. "Yeah. Shots of what?"

"Be at the lion cage at three o'clock. You'll never have a chance like this again, believe me."

"Sure, sure, but shots of what, friend?"

So Mr. Kemper bent his head and whispered to him, and as he did he saw the gleam start deep in Al's eyes and swell to the pale surfaces. But Al's eyes didn't gleam the way his wife's did. And after a while Mr. Kemper left them, and the cage that was silent except for the slow creaking of the trapeze.

After looking at his watch, Mr. Kemper walked faster. The sun dropped in the sticky sky and there was only a faint wind. And for the next hour or so Mr. Kemper was here, there and everywhere. If there was a bunch of little boys shouting at the rhinoceros, then Mr. Kemper was there, smiling and nodding. When a party of college students stood making dirty jokes about the baboons, there too was Mr. Kemper, eventually saying something that made everyone stare at him.

He was ubiquitous. He was with the people who craned their necks at the giraffes, and the ones who laughed at the sleek sea lions darting in their narrow troughs. He was with a family watching the anacondas drooping in green cubicles; he was at the bison corral; he saw the crocodile, the yak and the blesbok. And always, wherever he was, he had a few words to say about the lions. And time passed.

It was exactly three o'clock when he stood again at the



top of the stairway above the lion court. A lot of people were milling and shoving in front of the cages, a noisy crowd that made the lions nervous. They were awake now, pacing their cells, and the leopards were awake, and the jaguars. In the center cage the streak-maned lion put his head to the floor and coughed. Behind him the lioness waited, tense. The lion curved a paw around one of the bars and some of the people clapped their hands. Others whistled; several looked at their watches. Kemper, who was starting to smile again, watched the crowd. There was Al, his camera, and his wife, close to the center cage. The two teen-aged boys were near them. The little boy and his father were there, and many others that Mr. Kemper was glad to see. Hands clasped behind him, he stood looking down on them. Suddenly he felt powerful bonds clamp onto his mind.

Turning slowly around, he saw Ulbasar walking down the hill toward him, a tall man at his side. They stopped in front of him, their faces dark in the sun. "Here he is," said Ulbasar. The tall man at his left made the greeting sign of one Noble to another. "Lord Kjem," he said. Returning the sign, Mr. Kemper said, "Lord Gteris."

Gteris said, "I hate to do this; you know that. We were friends once. I hope you won't try to resist."

"I told Ulbasar I wouldn't. Together you're considerably stronger than I am. I'd be a fool to try anything."

"That's smart of you," said Gteris. "Now let's get to business. Ulbasar says you wouldn't tell him the location of your time rift. Is this true?"

"Certainly. Does a Noble answer to a Scientist? But of course I'll tell you, Gteris. The time rift is down there, behind the hedge opposite the lion cage."

All signs of friendliness left Gteris's face. He spun and gave orders. "Ulbasar, you heard him. Go down there and see if he's telling the truth. I'll stand guard over him. And keep the mind-block tight."

Ulbasar nodded and went down the steps. Mr. Kemper tested the vise that pressed against his mind; it held much too well. Gteris was looking at him reproachfully. "Really, Kjem, yours is conduct unbecoming a Noble. If you had to



murder somebody, why did it have to be a Scientist? And then all this forcing your own rift into the time-pattern. The Nobles are unhappy with you, Kjem."

"You know, I don't regret any of it," said Mr. Kemper, watching Ulbasar moving close to the crowd by the cages. "Tell me, how's the hunting back home?"

"Not too bad; I got some fine hawks a while back. I still wish I could handle cats the way you do, instead of— What's wrong with that crowd in front of the cage down there?"

Mr. Kemper said, "It's past three o'clock."

Below them a big man pushed through the crowd toward Ulbasar, shouting, "There's the guy told me to be here! There's the faker!" Ulbasar hesitated, looked around, and stopped. The big man caught Ulbasar's shoulder, and jabbed a finger against his chest. The crowd moved toward them.

Gteris said, "He's in trouble."

"He's as good as dead right now," Kemper said.

Gteris stared down at the crowd, then at Kemper. Swiftly he shot a warning thought to Ulbasar, who caught it. As he did the pressure eased slightly from Kemper's mind. It was enough. Kemper lashed out against Gteris's block. They stood there, minds twisting in combat. Then as Ulbasar was hemmed in by the crowd his support weakened, and Gteris fought alone. Slowly but inexorably he was forced back and out, and Kemper's mind was free. Gteris's face was haggard. "Good gods, Kjem!" he said. "Look at Ulbasar!"

"You can still help him. I'm not holding you."

Gteris looked wildly at him, then ran, bounding down the steps two at a time. He ran toward the crowd and began shouting at Ulbasar. Kemper saw the concentration on his face and knew he was trying to control the crowd. It was then that Mr. Kemper closed his eyes.

First he shut out the world around him: The dim sun on his ears, the smells of dusty summer and popcorn, the sounds of the small wind and the people. In the blackness of his mind he saw the lion court; each bar of the cage and the yellow lions inside it; the crowd and the two dark men. Then he made a picture of the bars loosening at the top of the cage and the bottom, and the entire section of the cage



front sliding ponderously sideways.

There was no sound anywhere. Then below him rang a gonging of steel on cement and after that the screaming, and over all of it, dwarfing the yells and the echoing clangs, came a roar that ripped the wind and shook the trees with thunder.

His eyes still closed, Kemper loosened the fronts of all the cages, one by one. After that he put all his mind to directing the lions. To Ulbasar he gave a quick death. Gteris he singled out for a special favor; he sent the streak-maned lion at him. As the lion crouched, Gteris stood unmoving, covering his face with his hands. "Stand and fight!" Kemper shouted. "At least die like a Noble!" But Gteris did not move, and the lion sprang. Kemper laughed, the old excitement of the hunt surging in him as he sent the cats leaping and clawing. He made sure that a special few of the ape-people died very slowly. In the distance a siren wailed.

Kemper did not hear the rushing sounds behind and above him. When he did, he called the lions to him, desperately. He looked up at the condors, hurtling like javelins, and behind them the eagles. And he knew why Gteris, the hunter of condors and eagles, had not tried to hold off the lions. Then the condors smashed down.

The streak-maned lion came to him, but it was too late. Mr. Kemper lay dying in the cold sun with the smell of lions like dust in his throat.

# THE COSMIC EXPENSE ACCOUNT

by C. M. Kornbluth

The basic forms of science-fantasy—the imaginary voyage, the extrapolative novel of the future, and the satire *ad absurdum*—all originated as vehicles for social criticism, literary devices employed by the more effective of God's angry men to flavor with adventure, or lubricate with humor, the bitter pill of reason.

Even in the heyday of Technocratic Utopianism, when the intellectual elite among the Boosters of Blind Progress were blandly assured that all the ills of man would one day be cured by beating our picks and shovels into pushbuttons, and our church chimes into Pavlovian dinner-bells—when most “scientifiction” was a hash and rehash of behaviorist doctrine and mechanist dogma for the worshipers of the fatted machine—there were still people like Kapek, Forster, and Benet, using the same medium to question the accepted credos.

Toward the end of that period, in the late thirties, a bitter teen-ager named Kornbluth discovered there was cigarette money in story writing. Now, at the age of 34, after nearly twenty years of writing, the angry boy has become an angrier man, who wields the scalpel of social satire with a savagely entertaining skill.

THE LACKAWANNA was still running one cautious morning train a day into Scranton, though the city was said to be emptying fast. Professor Leuten and I had a coach to ourselves, except for a scared, jittery trainman who hung around and talked at us.

“The name’s Pech,” he said. “And let me tell you, the Peches have been around for a mighty long time in these



parts. There's a town twenty-three miles north of Scranton named Pechville. Full of my cousins and aunts and uncles, and I used to visit there and we used to send picture post cards and get them, too. But my God, mister, what's happened to them?"

His question was rhetorical. He didn't realize that Professor Leuten and I happened to be the only two people outside the miscalled Plague Area who could probably answer it.

"Mr. Pech," I said, "if you don't mind we'd like to talk some business."

"Sorry," he said miserably, and went on to the next car.

When we were alone, Professor Leuten remarked, "An interesting reaction." He was very smooth about it. Without the slightest warning he whipped a huge, writhing, hairy spider from his pocket and thrust it at my face.

I was fast on the draw too. In one violent fling I was standing on my left foot in the aisle, thumbing my nose, my tongue stuck out. Gooseflesh rippled down my neck and shoulders.

"Very good," he said, and put the spider away. It was damnably realistic. Even knowing that it was a gadget of twisted springs and plush, I cringed at the thought of its nestling in his pocket. With me it was spiders. With the professor it was rats and asphyxiation. Toward the end of our mutual training program it took only one part per million of sulfur dioxide gas in his vicinity to send him whirling into the posture of defense, crane-like on one leg, tongue out and thumb to nose, the sweat of terror on his brow.

"I have something to tell you, Professor," I said.

"So?" he asked tolerantly. And that did it. The tolerance. I had been prepared to make my point with a dignified recital and apology, but there were two ways to tell the story and I suddenly chose the second.

"You're a phony," I said with satisfaction.

"*What?*" he gasped.

"A phony. A fake. A hoaxer. A self-deluding crackpot. Your Functional Epistemology is a farce. Let's not go into



this thing kidding ourselves.”

His accent thickened a little. “Led me remind you, Mr. Norris, that you are addressing a Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Göttingen and a member of the faculty of the University of Basle.”

“You mean a *privat-dozent* who teaches freshman logic. And I seem to remember that Göttingen revoked your degree.”

He said slowly, “I have known all along that you were a fool, Mr. Norris. Not until now did I realize that you are also an anti-Semite. It was the Nazis who went through an illegal ceremony of revocation.”

“So that makes me an anti-Semite. From a teacher of logic that’s very funny.”

“You are correct,” he said after a long pause. “I withdraw my remark. Now, would you be good enough to amplify yours?”

“Gladly, Professor. In the first place—”

I had been winding up the rubber rat in my pocket. I yanked it out and tossed it into his lap where it scrabbled and clawed. He yelled with terror, but the yell didn’t cost him a split second. Almost before it started from his throat he was standing one-legged, thumb to nose, tongue stuck out.

He thanked me coldly; I congratulated him coldly; I pocketed the rat while he shuddered and we went on with the conversation.

I told him how, eighteen months ago, Mr. Hopedale had called me into his office. Nice office, oak panels, signed pictures of Hopedale Press writers from our glorious past: Kipling, Barrie, Theodore Roosevelt and the rest of the backlog boys.

What about Eino Elekinen, Mr. Hopedale wanted to know. Eino was one of our novelists. His first, *Vinland the Good*, had been a critical success and a popular flop; *Cubs of the Viking Breed*, the sequel, made us all a little money. He was now a month past delivery date on the final volume of the trilogy and the end was not in sight.



"I think he's pulling a sit-down strike, Mr. Hopedale. He's way overdrawn now and I had to refuse him a thousand-dollar advance. He wanted to send his wife to the Virgin Islands for a divorce."

"Give him the money," Mr. Hopedale said impatiently. "How can you expect the man to write when he's beset by personal difficulties?"

"Mr. Hopedale," I said politely, "she could divorce him right here in New York State. He's given her grounds in all five boroughs and the western townships of Long Island. But that's not the point. He can't write. And even if he could, the last thing American literature needs right now is another trilogy about a Scandinavian immigrant family."

"I know," he said. "I know. He's not very good yet. But I think he's going to be, and do you want him to starve while he's getting the juvenilia out of his system?" His next remark had nothing to do with Elekinen. He looked at the signed photo of T. R.—"*To a bully publisher—*" and said, "Norris, we're broke."

I said, "Ah?"

"We owe everybody. Printer, paper mill, warehouse. Everybody. It's the end of Hopedale Press. Unless—I don't want you to think people have been reporting on you, Norris, but I understand you came up with an interesting idea at lunch yesterday. Some Swiss professor."

I had to think hard. "You must mean Leuten, Mr. Hopedale. No, there's nothing in it for us, sir. I was joking. My brother—he teaches philosophy at Columbia—mentioned him to me. Leuten's a crackpot. Every year or two Weintraub Verlag in Basle brings out another volume of his watchamacallit and they sell about a thousand. Functional Epistemology—my brother says it's all nonsense, the kind of stuff vanity presses put out. It was just a gag about turning him into a Schweitzer or a Toynbee and bringing out a one-volume condensation. People just buy his books—I suppose—because they got started and feel ashamed to stop."

Mr. Hopedale said, "Do it, Norris. Do it. We can scrape together enough cash for one big promotion and then—the



end. I'm going to see Brewster of Commercial Factors in the morning. I believe he will advance us sixty-five per cent on our accounts receivable." He tried on a cynical smile. It didn't become him. "Norris, you are what is technically called a Publisher's Bright Young Man. We can get seventy-five for a scholarly book. With luck and promotion we can sell in the hundred-thousands. Get on it." I nodded, feeling sick, and started out. Mr. Hopedale said in a tired voice, "And it might actually be work of some inspirational value."

Professor Leuten sat and listened, red-faced, breathing hard. "You—betrayed," he said at last. "You with the smiling face that came to Basle, that talked of lectures in America, that told me to sign your damnable contract. My face on the cover of the *Time* magazine that looks like a monkey, the idiotic interviews, the press releasements in my name that I never saw. America, I thought, and held my tongue. But—from the beginning—it was—a lie!" He buried his face in his hands and muttered, "*Ach!* You stink!"

That reminded me. I took a small stench-bomb from my pocket and crushed it.

He leaped up, balanced on one leg and thumbed his nose. His tongue was out four inches and he was panting with the terror of asphyxiation.

"Very good," I said.

"Thank you. I suggest we move to the other end of the car."

We and our luggage were settled before he began to breathe normally. I judged that the panic and most of his anger had passed. "Professor," I said cautiously, "I've been thinking of what we do when—and if—we find Miss Phoebe."

"We shall complete her re-education," he said. "We shall point out that her unleashed powers have been dysfunctionally applied."

"I can think of something better to do than completing her re-education. It's why I spoke a little harshly. Presumably Miss Phoebe considers you the greatest man in the world."

He smiled reminiscently and I knew what he was thinking.



La Plume, Pa.  
Wednesday  
Four A.M. (!)

Professor Konrad Leuten  
c/o The Hopedale Press  
New York City, New York

My Dear Professor,

Though you are a famous and busy man I do hope you will take time to read a few words of *grateful* tribute from an old lady (eighty-four). I have just finished your magnificent and inspirational book *How to Live on the Cosmic Expense Account: an Introduction to Functional Epistemology*.

Professor, I *believe*. I *know* every splendid word in your book is *true*. If there is one chapter finer than the others it is No. 9, "How to Be in Utter Harmony with Your Environment." The Twelve Rules in that chapter shall from this *minute* be my guiding light, and I shall practice them *faithfully* forever.

Your grateful friend,  
(Miss) Phoebe Bancroft

That flattering letter reached us on Friday, one day after the papers reported with amusement or dismay the "black-out" of La Plume, Pennsylvania. The term "Plague Area" came later.

"I suppose she might," said the professor.

"Well, think about it."

The train slowed for a turn. I noticed that the track was lined with men and women. And some of them, by God, were leaping for the moving train! Brakes went on with a squeal and jolt; my nose bashed against the seat in front of us.

"Aggression," the professor said, astonished. "But that is not in the pattern!"

We saw the trainman in the vestibule opening the door to yell at the trackside people. He was trampled as they swarmed aboard, filling, jamming the car in a twinkling.

"Got to Scranton," we heard them saying. "Zombies—"

"I get it," I shouted at the professor over their hubbub. "These are refugees from Scranton. They must have blocked the track. Right now they're probably bullying the engineer into backing up all the way to Wilkes-Barre. We've got to get off!"

"Ja," he said. We were in an end seat. By elbowing, crowding and a little slugging we got to the vestibule and dropped to the tracks. The professor lost all his luggage in the brief, fierce struggle. I saved only my briefcase. The powers of Hell itself were not going to separate me from that briefcase.

Hundreds of yelling, milling people were trying to climb aboard. Some made it to the roofs of the cars after it was physically impossible for one more body to be fitted inside. The locomotive uttered a despairing toot and the train began to back up.

"Well," I said, "we head north."

We found U. S. 6 after a short overland hike and trudged along the concrete. There was no traffic. Everybody with a car had left Scranton days ago, and nobody was going into Scranton. Except us.

We saw our first zombie where a signpost told us it was three miles to the city. She was a woman in a Mother Hubbard and sunbonnet. I couldn't tell whether she was young or old, beautiful or a hag. She gave us a sweet, empty smile and asked if we had any food. I said no. She said she wasn't complaining about her lot but she *was* hungry, and of course the vegetables and things were *so* much better now that they weren't poisoning the soil with those dreadful chemical fertilizers. Then she said maybe there might be something to eat down the road, wished us a pleasant good day and went on.

"Dreadful chemical fertilizers?" I asked.

The professor said, "I believe that is a contribution by the Duchess of Carbondale to Miss Phoebe's reign. Several interviews mention it." We walked on. I could read his mind like a book. *He hasn't even read the interviews. He is a foolish, an impossible young man. And yet he is here, he has under-*



*gone a rigorous course of training, he is after all risking a sort of death. Why?* I let him go on wondering. The answer was in my briefcase.

"When do you think we'll be in range?" I asked.

"Heaven knows," he said testily. "Too many variables. Maybe it's different when she sleeps, maybe it grows at different rates varying as the number of people affected. I feel nothing yet."

"Neither do I."

And when we felt something—specifically, when we felt Miss Phoebe Bancroft practicing the Twelve Rules of "How to Be in Utter Harmony with Your Environment"—we would do something completely idiotic, something that had got us thrown—literally *thrown*—out of the office of the Secretary of Defense.

He had thundered at us, "Are you two trying to make a fool of me? Are you proposing that soldiers of the United States Army undergo a three-month training course *in sticking out their tongues and thumbing their noses?*" He was quivering with elevated blood pressure. Two M.P. lieutenants collared us under his personal orders and tossed us down the Pentagon steps when we were unable to deny that he had stated our proposal more or less correctly.

And so squads, platoons, companies, battalions and regiments marched into the Plague Area and never marched out again.

Some soldiers stumbled out as zombies. After a few days spent at a sufficient distance from the Plague Area their minds cleared and they told their confused stories. Something came over them, they said. A mental fuzziness almost impossible to describe. They liked it where they were, for instance; they left the Plague Area only by accident. They were wrapped in a vague, silly contentment even when they were hungry, which was usually. What was life like in the Plague Area? Well, not much happened. You wandered around looking for food. A lot of people looked sick but seemed to be contented. Farmers in the area gave you food with the universal silly smile, but their crops were very poor. Animal pests got most of them. Nobody seemed to eat meat.



Nobody quarreled or fought or ever said a harsh word in the Plague Area. And it was hell on earth. Nothing conceivable could induce any of them to return.

The Duchess of Carbondale? Yes, sometimes she came driving by in her chariot wearing fluttery robes and a golden crown. Everybody bowed down to her. She was a big, fat middle-aged woman with rimless glasses and a pinched look of righteous triumph on her face.

The recovered zombies at first were quarantined and doctors made their wills before going to examine them. This proved to be unnecessary and the examinations proved to be fruitless. No bacteria, no rickettsia, no viruses. Nothing. Which didn't stop them from continuing in the assumption embodied in the official name of the affected counties.

Professor Leuten and I knew better, of course. For knowing better we were thrown out of offices, declined interviews and once almost locked up as lunatics. That was when we tried to get through to the President direct. The Secret Service, I am able to testify, guards our Chief Executive with a zeal that borders on ferocity.

"How goes the book?" Professor Leuten asked abruptly.

"Third hundred-thousand. Why? Want an advance?"

I don't understand German, but I can recognize deep, heartfelt profanity in any language. He spluttered and crackled for almost a full minute before he snarled in English, "Idiots! Dolts! Out of almost one-third of a million readers, exactly one has *read* the book!"

I wanted to defer comment on that. "There's a car," I said.

"Obviously it stalled and was abandoned by a refugee from Scranton."

"Let's have a look anyway." It was a battered old Ford sedan halfway off the pavement. The rear was full of canned goods and liquor. Somebody had been looting. I pushed the starter and cranked for a while; the motor didn't catch.

"Useless," said the professor. I ignored him, yanked the dashboard hood button and got out to inspect the guts. There was air showing on top of the gas in the sediment cup.

"We ride, professor," I told him. "I know these babies and their fuel pumps. The car quit on the upgrade there and he



let it roll back." I unscrewed the clamp of the carburetor air filter, twisted the filter off and heaved it into the roadside bushes. The professor, of course was a "mere-machinery" boy with the true European intellectual's contempt for greasy hands. He stood by haughtily while I poured a bottle of gin empty, found a wrench in the toolbox that fit the gas tank drain plug and refilled the gin bottle with gasoline. He condescended to sit behind the wheel and crank the motor from time to time while I sprinkled gas into the carburetor. Each time the motor coughed there was less air showing in the sediment cup; finally the motor caught for good. I moved him over, tucked my briefcase in beside me, U-turned on the broad, empty highway and we chugged north into Scranton.

It was only natural that he edged away from me, I suppose. I was grimy from working under the gas tank. This plus the discreditable ability I had shown in starting the stalled car reminded him that he was, after all, a Herr Doktor from a *real* university while I was, after all, a publisher's employee with nebulous qualifications from some place called Cornell. The atmosphere was wrong for it, but sooner or later he had to be told.

"Professor, we've got to have a talk and get something straight before we find Miss Phoebe."

He looked at the huge striped sign the city fathers of Scranton had wisely erected to mark that awful downgrade into the city. WARNING! SEVEN-MILE DEATH TRAP AHEAD. SHIFT INTO LOWER GEAR. \$50 FINE. OBEY OR PAY!

"What is there to get straight?" he demanded. "She has partially mastered Functional Epistemology—even though Hopedale Press prefers to call it 'Living on the Cosmic Expense Account.' This has unleashed certain latent powers of hers. It is simply our task to complete her mastery of the ethical aspect of F.E. She will cease to dominate other minds as soon as she comprehends that her behavior is dysfunctional and in contravention of the Principle of Permissive Evolution." To him the matter was settled. He mused, "Really, I should not have let you cut so drastically my expo-



sition of Dyadic Imbalance; that must be the root of her difficulty. A brief inductive explanation—”

“Professor,” I said. “I thought I told you in the train that you’re a fake.”

He corrected me loftily. “You told me that you *think* I’m a fake, Mr. Norris. Naturally I was angered by your duplicity, but your opinion of me proves nothing. I ask you to look around you. Is this fakery?”

We were well into the city. Bewildered dogs yelped at our car. Windows were broken and goods were scattered on the sidewalks; here and there a house was burning brightly. Smashed and overturned cars dotted the streets, and zombies walked slowly around them. When Miss Phoebe hit a city the effects were something like a thousand-bomber raid.

“It’s not fakery,” I said, steering around a smiling man in a straw hat and overalls. “It isn’t Functional Epistemology either. It’s *faith* in Functional Epistemology. It could have been faith in anything, but your book just happened to be what she settled on.”

“Are you *daring*,” he demanded, white to the lips, “to compare me with the faith healers?”

“Yes,” I said wearily. “They get their cures. So do lots of people. Let’s roll it up in a ball, professor. I think the best thing to do when we meet Miss Phoebe is for you to tell her you’re a fake. Destroy her faith in you and your system and I think she’ll turn back into a normal old lady again. Wait a minute! Don’t tell me you’re not a fake. I can prove you are. You say she’s partly mastered F.E. and gets her powers from that partial mastery. Well, presumably you’ve completely mastered F.E., since you invented it. So why can’t you do everything she’s done, and lots more? Why can’t you end this mess by levitating to La Plume, instead of taking the Lackawanna and a 1941 Ford? And, by God, why couldn’t you fix the Ford with a pass of the hands and F.E. instead of standing by while I worked?”

His voice was genuinely puzzled. “I thought I just explained, Norris. Though it never occurred to me before, I suppose I could do what you say, but I wouldn’t dream of it. As I said, it would be dys-functional and in complete con-



travention of the Principle of Permissive—”

I said something very rude and added, “In short, you can but you won’t.”

“Naturally not! The Principle of Permissive—” He looked at me with slow awareness dawning in his eyes. “Norris! My editor. My proofreader. My by-the-publisher-officially-assigned *fidus Achates*. Norris, haven’t *you* read my book?”

“No,” I said shortly. “I’ve been much too busy. You didn’t get on the cover of *Time* magazine by blind chance, you know.”

He was laughing helplessly. “How goes that song,” he finally asked me, his eyes damp, “‘God Bless America’?”

I stopped the car abruptly. “I think I feel something,” I said. “Professor, I like you.”

“I like you too, Norris,” he told me. “Norris, my boy, what do you think of ladies?”

“Delicate creatures. Custodians of culture. Professor, what about meat-eating?”

“Shocking barbarous survival. *This is it, Norris!*”

We yanked open the doors and leaped out. We stood on one foot each, thumbed our noses and stuck out our tongues.

Allowing for the time on the train, this was the 1,962d time I had done it in the past two months. One thousand, nine hundred and sixty-one times the professor had arranged for spiders to pop out at me from books, from the television screen, from under steaks, from desk drawers, from my pockets, from his. Black widows, tarantulas, harmless (*hah!*) big house spiders, real and imitation. One thousand, nine hundred and sixty-one times I had felt the arachnophobe’s horrified revulsion. Each time I felt it I had thrown major voluntary muscular systems into play by drawing up one leg violently, violently swinging my hand to my nose, violently grimacing to stick out my tongue.

My body had learned at last. There was no spider this time; there was only Miss Phoebe: a vague, pleasant feeling something like the first martini. But my posture of defense this 1,962d time was accompanied by the old rejection and horror. It had no spider, so it turned on Miss Phoebe. The



vague first-martini feeling vanished like morning mist burned away by the sun.

I relaxed cautiously. On the other side of the car so did Professor Leuten. "Professor," I said, "I don't like you any more."

"Thank you," he said coldly. "Nor do I like you."

"I guess we're back to normal," I said. "Climb in." He climbed in and we started off. I grudgingly said, "Congratulations."

"Because it worked? Don't be ridiculous. It was to be expected that a plan of campaign derived from the principles of Functional Epistemology would be successful. All that was required was that you be at least as smart as one of Professor Pavlov's dogs, and I admit I considered that hypothesis the weak link in my chain of reasoning. . . ."

We stopped for a meal from the canned stuff in the back of the car about one o'clock and then chugged steadily north through the ruined countryside. The little towns were wrecked and abandoned. Presumably refugees from the expanding Plague Area did the first damage by looting; the subsequent destruction just—happened. It showed you what would just happen to any twentieth-century town or city in the course of a few weeks if the people who wage endless war against breakdown and dilapidation put aside their arms. It was anybody's guess whether fire or water had done more damage.

Between the towns the animals were incredibly bold. There was a veritable army of rabbits eating their way across a field of clover. A farmer-zombie flapped a patchwork quilt at them, saying affectionately, "Shoo, little bunnies! Go away, now! I *mean* it!"

But they knew he didn't, and continued to chew their way across his field.

I stopped the car and called to the farmer. He came right away, smiling. "The little dickenses!" he said, waving at the rabbits. "But I haven't the heart to really scare them."

"Are you happy?" I asked him.

"Oh, yes!" His eyes were sunken and bright; his cheek-



bones showed on his starved face. "People should be considerate," he said. "I always say that being considerate is what matters most."

"Don't you miss electricity and cars and tractors?"

"Goodness, no. I always say that things were better in the old days. Life was more gracious, I always say. Why, I don't miss gasoline or electricity one little bit. Everybody's so considerate and gracious that it makes up for everything."

"I wonder if you'd be so considerate and gracious as to lie down in the road so we can drive over you?"

He looked mildly surprised and started to get down, saying, "Well, if it would afford you gentlemen any pleasure—"

"No; don't bother after all. You can get back to your rabbits."

He touched his straw hat and went away, beaming. We drove on. I said to the professor, "Chapter Nine: 'How to Be in Utter Harmony with Your Environment.' Only she didn't change herself, Professor Leuten; she changed the environment. Every man and woman in the Area is what Miss Phoebe thinks they ought to be: silly, sentimental, obliging and gracious to the point of idiocy. Nostalgic and all thumbs when it comes to this dreadful machinery."

"Norris," the professor said thoughtfully, "we've been associated for some time. I think you might drop the 'professor' and call me 'Leuten.' In a way we're friends—"

I jammed on the worn, mushy brakes. "Out!" I yelled, and we piled out. The silly glow was enveloping me fast. Again, thumb to nose and tongue out, I burned it away. When I looked at the professor and was quite sure he was a stubborn old fossil I knew I was all right again. When he glared at me and snapped, "Naturally I withdraw my last remark, Norris, and no chentleman would hold me to it," I knew *he* was normal. We got in and kept going north.

The devastation became noticeably worse after we passed a gutted, stinking shambles that had once been the town of Meshoppen, Pa. After Meshoppen there were more bodies on the road and the flies became a horror. No pyrethrum from Kenya. No DDT from Wilmington. We drove in the afternoon heat with the windows cranked up and the hood



ventilator closed. It was at about Meshoppen's radius from La Plume that things had stabilized for a while and the Army Engineers actually began to throw up barbed wire. Who knew what happened then? Perhaps Miss Phoebe recovered from a slight cold, or perhaps she told herself firmly that her faith in Professor Leuten's wonderful book was weakening; that she must take hold of herself and really work *hard* at being in utter harmony with her environment. The next morning—no Army Engineers. Zombies in uniform were glimpsed wandering about and smiling. The next morning the radius of the Plague Area was growing at the old mile a day.

I wanted distraction from the sweat that streamed down my face. "Professor," I said, "do you remember the last word in Miss Phoebe's letter? It was 'forever.' Do you suppose . . . ?"

"Immortality? Yes; I think that is well within the range of misapplied F.E. Of course complete mastery of F.E. ensures that no such selfish power would be invoked. The beauty of F.E. is its conservatism, in the kinetic sense. It is self-regulating. A world in which universal mastery of F.E. has been achieved—and I now perceive that the publication of my views by the Hopedale Press was if anything a step *away* from that ideal—would be in no outward wise different from the present world."

"Built-in escape clause," I snapped. "Like yoga. You ask 'em to prove they've achieved self-mastery, just a little demonstration like levitating or turning transparent, but they're all ready for you. They tell you they've achieved so much self-mastery they've mastered the desire to levitate or turn transparent. I almost wish I'd read your book, professor, instead of just editing it. Maybe you're smarter than I thought."

He turned brick-red and gritted out, "Your insults merely bore me, Norris."

The highway took a turn and we turned with it. I braked again and rubbed my eyes. "Do you see them?" I asked the professor.

"Yes," he said matter-of-factly. "This must be the retinue



of the Duchess of Carbondale.”

They were a dozen men shoulder to shoulder barricading the road. They were armed with miscellaneous sporting rifles and one bazooka. They wore kilt-like garments and what seemed to be bracelets from a five-and-ten. When we stopped they opened up the center of the line and the Duchess of Carbondale drove through in her chariot—only the chariot was a harness-racing sulky and she didn’t drive it; the horse was led by a skinny teen-age girl got up as Charmian for a high-school production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The Duchess herself wore ample white robes, a tiara and junk jewelry. She looked like your unfavorite aunt, the fat one, or a grade-school teacher you remember with loathing when you’re forty, or one of those women who ring your doorbell and try to bully you into signing petitions against fluoridation or atheism in the public schools.

The bazooka man had his stovepipe trained on our hood. His finger was on the button and he was waiting for the Duchess to nod. “Get out,” I told the professor, grabbing my briefcase. He looked at the bazooka and we got out.

“Hail, O mortals,” said the Duchess.

I looked helplessly at the professor. Not even my extensive experience with lady novelists had equipped me to deal with the situation. He, however, was able to take the ball. He was a European and he had status and that’s the starting point for them: establish status and then conduct yourself accordingly. He said, “Madame, my name is Konrad Leuten. I am a doctor of philosophy of the University of Göttingen and a member of the faculty of the University of Basle. Whom have I the honor to address?”

Her eyes narrowed appraisingly. “O mortal,” she said, and her voice was less windily dramatic, “know ye that here in the New Lemuria worldly titles are as naught. And know ye not that the pure hearts of my subjects may not be sullied by base machinery?”

“I didn’t know, madame,” Leuten said politely. “I apologize. We intended, however, to go only as far as La Plume. May we have your permission to do so?”

At the mention of La Plume she went poker-faced. After



a moment she waved at the bazooka man. "Destroy, O Phraxanartes, the base machine of the strangers," she said. Phraxanartes touched the button of his stovepipe. Leuten and I jumped for the ditch, my hand welded to the briefcase-handle, when the rocket whooshed into the poor old Ford's motor. We huddled there while the gas tank boomed and cans and bottles exploded. The noise subsided to a crackling roar and the whizzing fragments stopped coming our way after maybe a minute. I put my head up first. The Duchess and her retinue were gone, presumably melted into the roadside stand of trees.

Her windy contralto blasted out, "Arise, O strangers, and join us."

Leuten said from the ditch, "A perfectly reasonable request, Norris. Let us do so. After all, one must be obliging."

"And gracious," I added.

*Good old Duchess! I thought. Good old Leuten! Wonderful old world, with hills and trees and bunnies and kitties and considerate people . . .*

Leuten was standing on one foot, thumbing his nose, sticking out his tongue, screaming, "Norris! Norris! Defend yourself!" He was slapping my face with his free hand. Sluggishly I went into the posture of defense, thinking: *Such nonsense. Defense against what? But I wouldn't hurt old Leuten's feelings for the world—*

Adrenalin boiled through my veins, triggered by the posture. Spiders. Crawling, hairy, horrid spiders with purple, venom-dripping fangs. They hid in your shoes and bit you and your feet swelled with the poison. Their sticky, loathsome webs brushed across your face when you walked in the dark and they came scuttling silently, champing their jaws, winking their evil gem-like eyes. *Spiders!*

The voice of the duchess blared impatiently, "I said, join us, O strangers. Well, what are you waiting for?"

The professor and I relaxed and looked at each other. "She's mad," the professor said softly. "From an asylum."

"I doubt it. You don't know America very well. Maybe you lock them up when they get like that in Europe; over here we elect them chairlady of the Library Fund Drive. If



we don't, we never hear the end of it."

The costumed girl was leading the Duchess's sulky onto the road again. Some of her retinue were beginning to follow; she waved them back and dismissed the girl curtly. We skirted the heat of the burning car and approached her. It was that or try to outrun a volley from the miscellaneous sporting rifles.

"O strangers," she said, "you mentioned La Plume. Do you happen to be acquainted with my dear friend, Phoebe Bancroft?"

The professor nodded before I could stop him. But almost simultaneously with his nod I was dragging the Duchess from her improvised chariot. It was very unpleasant, but I put my hands around her throat and knelt on her. It meant letting go of the briefcase but it was worth it.

She gurgled and floundered and managed to whoop, "Don't shoot! I take it back, don't shoot them. Pamphilus, don't shoot, you might hit me!"

"Send 'em away," I told her.

"Never!" she blared. "They are my loyal retainers."

"You try, professor," I said.

I believe what he put on then was his classroom manner. He stiffened and swelled and rasped toward the shrubbery, "Come out at once. All of you."

They came out, shambling and puzzled. They realized that something was very wrong. There was the Duchess on the ground and she wasn't telling them what to do the way she'd been telling them for weeks now. They wanted to oblige her in any little way they could, like shooting strangers, or scrounging canned food for her, but how could they oblige her while she lay there slowly turning purple? It was very confusing. Luckily there was somebody else to oblige, the professor.

"Go away," he barked at them. "Go far away. We do not need you any more. And throw away your guns."

Well, that was something a body could understand. They smiled and threw away their guns and went away in their obliging and considerate fashion.

I eased up on the Duchess's throat. "What was that guff



about the New Lemuria?" I asked her.

"You're a rude and ignorant young man," she snapped. From the corner of my eye I could see the professor involuntarily nodding agreement. "Every educated person knows that the lost wisdom of Lemuria was to be revived in the person of a beautiful priestess this year. According to the science of pyramidology—"

Beautiful priestess? Oh.

The professor and I stood by while she spouted an amazing compost of lost-continentism, the Ten Tribes, anti-fluoridation, vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, organic farming, astrology, flying saucers, and the prose poems of Khalil Gibran.

The professor said dubiously at last, "I suppose one must call her a sort of Cultural Diffusionist. . . ." He was happier when he had her classified. He went on: "I think you know Miss Phoebe Bancroft. We wish you to present us to her as soon as possible."

"Professor," I complained, "we have a roadmap and we can find La Plume. And once we've found La Plume I don't think it'll be very hard to find Miss Phoebe."

"I will be pleased to accompany you," said the Duchess. "Though normally I frown on mechanical devices, I keep an automobile near by in case of—in case of—*well!* Of all the *rude—!*"

Believe it or not, she was speechless. Nothing in her rich store of gibberish and hate seemed to fit the situation. Anti-fluoridation, organic farming, even Khalil Gibran were irrelevant in the face of us two each standing on one leg, thumbing our noses and sticking out our tongues.

Undeniably the posture of defense was losing efficiency. It took longer to burn away the foolish glow. . . .

"Professor," I asked after we warily relaxed, "how many more of those can we take?"

He shrugged. "That is why a guide will be useful," he said. "Madame, I believe you mentioned an automobile."

"I know!" she said brightly. "It was asana yoga, wasn't it? Postures, I mean?"

The professor sucked an invisible lemon. "No, madame,"



he said cadaverously. "It was neither siddhasana nor padmasana. Yoga has been subsumed under Functional Epistemology, as has every other working philosophical system, Eastern and Western—but we waste time. The automobile?"

"You have to do that every so often, is that it?"

"We will leave it at that, madame. The automobile, please."

"Come right along," she said gaily. I didn't like the look on her face. Madame Chairlady was about to spring a parliamentary coup. But I got my briefcase and followed.

The car was in a near-by barn. It was a handsome new Lincoln, and I was reasonably certain that our fair cicerone had stolen it, but then, we had stolen the Ford.

I loaded the briefcase in and took the wheel over her objections and we headed for La Plume, a dozen miles away. On the road she yelped, "Oh, *Functional* Epistemology—and you're Professor *Leuten!*"

"Yes, madame," he wearily agreed.

"I've read your book, of course. So has Miss Bancroft; she'll be so pleased to see you."

"Then why, madame, did you order your subjects to murder us?"

"Well, professor, of course I didn't know who you were then, and it *was* rather shocking, seeing somebody in a car. I, ah, had the feeling that you were up to no good, especially when you mentioned dear Miss Bancroft. *She*, you know, is really responsible for the re-emergence of the New Lemuria."

"Indeed?" said the professor. "You understand, then, about Leveled Personality Interflow?" He was beaming.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Leveled Personality Interflow!" he barked. "Chapter Nine!"

"Oh. In your book, of course. Well, as a matter of fact I *skipped*—"

"Another one," muttered the professor, leaning back.

The Duchess chattered on: "Dear Miss Bancroft, of course, swears by your book. But you were asking—no, it wasn't what you said. I cast her horoscope and it turned out that *she* is the Twenty-Seventh Pendragon!"



"*Scheissdreck*," the professor mumbled, too discouraged to translate.

"So naturally, professor, she incarnates Taliesin *spiritually* and"—a modest giggle—"you know who incarnates it *materially*. Which is only sensible, since I'm descended from the high priestesses of Mu. Little did I think when I was running the Wee Occult Book Shoppe in Carbondale!"

"*Ja*," said the professor. He made an effort. "Madame, tell me something. Do you never feel a certain thing, a sense of friendliness and intoxication and good-will enveloping you quite suddenly?"

"Oh, *that*," she said scornfully. "Yes; every now and then. It doesn't bother me. I just think of all the work I have to do. How I must stamp out the dreadful, soul-destroying advocates of meat-eating, and chemical fertilizer, and fluoridation. How I must wage the good fight for occult science and *crush* the materialistic philosophers. How I must tear down our corrupt and self-seeking ministers and priests, our rotten laws and customs—"

"*Lieber Gott*," the professor marveled as she went on. "With Norris it is spiders. With me it is rats and asphyxiation. But with this woman it is apparently everything in the Kosmos except her own revolting self!" She didn't hear him; she was demanding that the voting age for women be lowered to sixteen and for men raised to thirty-five.

We plowed through flies and mosquitoes like smoke. The flies bred happily on dead cows and *in* sheep which unfortunately were still alive. There wasn't oil cake for the cows in the New Lemuria. There wasn't sheep-dip for the sheep. There weren't state and county and township and village road crews constantly patrolling, unplugging sluices, clearing gutters, replacing rusted culverts, and so quite naturally the countryside was reverting to swampland. The mosquitoes loved it.

"*La Plume*," the Duchess announced gaily. "And that's Miss Phoebe Bancroft's little house right there. Just *why* did you wish to see her, professor, by the way?"

"To complete her re-education . . ." the professor said in a tired voice.



Miss Phoebe's house, and the few near it, were the only places we had seen in the Area which weren't blighted by neglect. Miss Phoebe, of course, was able to tell the shambling zombies what to do in the way of truck-gardening, lawn-mowing and maintenance. The bugs weren't too bad there.

"She's probably resting, poor dear," said the Duchess. I stopped the car and we got out. The Duchess said something about Kleenex and got in again and rummaged through the glove compartment.

"Please, professor," I said, clutching my briefcase. "Play it the smart way. The way I told you."

"Norris," he said, "I realize that you have my best interests at heart. You're a good boy, Norris, and I like you—"

"*Watch it!*" I yelled, and swung into the posture of defense. So did he.

*Spiders.* It wasn't a good old world, not while there were loathsome spiders in it. *Spiders—*

And a pistol shot past my ear. The professor fell. I turned and saw the Duchess looking smug, about to shoot me too. I sidestepped and she missed; as I slapped the automatic out of her hand I thought confusedly that it was a near-miracle, her hitting the professor at five paces even if he was a standing target. People don't realize how hard it is to hit *anything* with a hand-gun.

I suppose I was going to kill her or at least damage her badly when a new element intruded. A little old white-haired lady tottering down the neat gravel path from the house. She wore a nice pastel dress which surprised me; somehow I had always thought of her in black.

"Bertha!" Miss Phoebe rapped out. "What have you done?"

The Duchess simpered. "That man there was going to harm you, Phoebe, dear. And this fellow is just as bad—"

Miss Phoebe said, "Nonsense. Nobody can harm me. Chapter Nine, Rule Seven. Bertha, I saw you shoot that gentleman. I'm very angry with you, Bertha. Very angry."

The Duchess turned up her eyes and crumpled. I didn't have to check; I was sure she was dead. Miss Phoebe was



once again In Utter Harmony With Her Environment.

I went over and knelt beside the professor. He had a hole in his stomach and was still breathing. There wasn't much blood. I sat down and cried. For the professor. For the poor damned human race which at a mile per day would be gobbled up into apathy and idiocy. Good-by, Newton and Einstein; good-by, steak dinners and Michelangelo and Tenzing Norkay; good-by, Moses, Rodin, Kwan Yin, transistors, Boole and Steichen. . . .

A redheaded man with an Adam's apple was saying gently to Miss Phoebe, "It's this rabbit, ma'am." And indeed an enormous rabbit was loping up to him. "Every time I find a turnip or something he takes it away from me and he kicks and bites when I try to reason with him—" And indeed he took a piece of turnip from his pocket and the rabbit insolently pawed it from his hand and nibbled it triumphantly with one wise-guy eye cocked up at his victim. "He does that every time, Miss Phoebe," the man said unhappily.

The little old lady said, "I'll think of something, Henry. But let me take care of these people first."

"Yes, ma'am," Henry said. He reached out cautiously for his piece of turnip and the rabbit bit him and then went back to its nibbling.

"Young man," Miss Phoebe said to me, "what's wrong? You're giving in to despair. You mustn't do that. Chapter Nine, Rule Three."

I pulled myself together enough to say, "This is Professor Leuten. He's dying."

Her eyes widened. "*The Professor Leuten?*" I nodded. "*How to Live on the Cosmic Expense Account?*" I nodded.

"Oh, dear! If only there were something I could do!"

Heal the dying? Apparently not. She didn't think she could, so she couldn't.

"Professor," I said. "Professor."

He opened his eyes and said something in German, then, hazily: "Woman shot me. Spoil her—racket, you call it? Who is this?" He grimaced with pain.

"I'm Miss Phoebe Bancroft, Professor Leuten," she breathed, leaning over him. "I'm so dreadfully sorry; I ad-



mire your wonderful book so much."

His weary eyes turned to me. "So, Norris," he said. "No time to do it right. We do it your way. Help me up."

I helped him to his feet, suffering, I think, almost as much as he did. The wound started to bleed more copiously.

"No!" Miss Phoebe exclaimed. "You should lie down."

The professor leered. "Good idea, baby. You want to keep me company?"

"What's that?" she snapped.

"You heard me, baby. Say, you got any liquor in your place?"

"Certainly not! Alcohol is inimical to the development of the higher functions of the mind. Chapter Nine—"

"Pfui on Chapter Nine, baby. I chust wrote that stuff for money."

If Miss Phoebe hadn't been in a state resembling surgical shock after hearing that, she would have seen the pain convulsing his face. "You mean. . . ?" she quavered, beginning to look her age for the first time.

"Sure. Lotta garbage. Sling fancy words and make money. What I go for is liquor and women. Women like you, baby."

The goose did it.

Weeping, frightened, insulted and lost, she tottered blindly up the neat path to her house. I eased the professor to the ground. He was biting almost through his lower lip.

I heard a new noise behind me. It was Henry, the redhead with the Adam's apple. He was chewing his piece of turnip and had hold of the big rabbit by the hind legs. He was flailing it against a tree. Henry looked ferocious, savage, carnivorous and very, very dangerous to meddle with. In a word, human.

"Professor," I breathed at his waxen face, "you've done it. It's broken. Over. No more Plague Area."

He muttered, his eyes closed, "I regret not doing it properly . . . but tell the people how I died, Norris. With dignity, without fear. Because of Functional Epistemology."

I said through tears, "I'll do more than tell them, professor. The world will know about your heroism. The world must know. We've got to make a book of this—your au-



thentic, authorized, fictional biography—and Hopedale's West Coast agent'll see to the film sale—"

"Film?" he said drowsily. "Book . . . ?"

"Yes. Your years of struggle, the little girl at home who kept faith in you when everybody scoffed, your burning mission to transform the world, and the climax—here, now!—as you give up your life for your philosophy."

"What girl?" he asked weakly.

"There must have been someone, professor. We'll find someone."

"You would," he asked feebly, "document my expulsion from Germany by the Nazis?"

"Well, I don't think so, professor. The export market's important, especially when it comes to selling film rights, and you don't want to go offending people by raking up old memories. But don't worry, professor. The big thing is, the world will never forget you and what you've done."

He opened his eyes and breathed: "You mean *your* version of what I've done. Ach, Norris, Norris! Never did I think there was a power on Earth which could force me to contravene the Principle of Permissive Evolution." His voice became stronger. "But you, Norris, are that power." He got to his feet, grunting. "Norris," he said, "I hereby give you formal warning that any attempt to make a fictional biography or cinema film of my life will result in an immediate injunction being—you say slapped?—upon you, as well as suits for damages from libel, copyright infringement and invasion of privacy. I have had *enough*."

"Professor," I gasped. "You're well!"

He grimaced. "I'm sick. Profoundly sick to my stomach at my contravention of the Principle of Permissive—"

His voice grew fainter. This was because he was rising slowly into the air. He leveled off at a hundred feet and called, "Send the royalty statements to my old address in Basle. And remember, Norris, I warned you—"

He zoomed eastward then at perhaps one hundred miles per hour. I think he was picking up speed when he vanished from sight.

I stood there for ten minutes or so and sighed and rubbed



my eyes and wondered whether anything was worth while. I decided I'd read the professor's book tomorrow without fail, unless something came up.

Then I took my briefcase and went up the walk and into Miss Phoebe's house. (Henry had made a twig fire on the lawn and was roasting his rabbit; he glared at me most disobligingly and I skirted him with care.)

This was, after all, the payoff; this was, after all, the reason why I had risked my life and sanity.

"Miss Phoebe," I said to her, taking it out of the briefcase, "I represent the Hopedale Press; this is one of our standard contracts. We're very much interested in publishing the story of your life, with special emphasis on the events of the past few weeks. Naturally you'd have an experienced collaborator. I believe sales in the hundred-thousands wouldn't be too much to expect. I would suggest as a title—that's right, you sign on that line there—*How to Be Supreme Ruler of Everybody*. . . ."



# THE FAR LOOK

by Theodore L. Thomas

The true science-fiction story is a highly specialized form which very few writers can handle adequately. Most of what appears under the label is either space opera (essentially a transplanted Western or jungle or fight yarn) or—at the other extreme—just dramatized essay, minus action or credible characterization.

To be good science-fiction, a story must contain a rare blend of intellection and emotion; puzzle and plot must be integrally related in such a way that the human problem arises out of the idea-extrapolation, and the resolution of the one is impossible without the solution to the other.

Two further requirements for the good science-fiction writer: to be a good writer; and to have at least enough scientific background to avoid contradicting currently accepted "facts."

Perhaps in part due to the training provided by his profession (the author is a patent attorney, who also writes highly entertaining articles about his own field under the pseudonym of Leonard Lockhard), Mr. Thomas's story achieves the same intense quality of realism that may be found in a Bonestell moonscape: the product of painstaking detail-work plus a thorough awareness of underlying structural realities, and an imagination that can visualize in technicolor.

*So, like things of stone in a valley lone,  
Quiet we sat and dumb:  
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,  
Like a madman on a drum.*

OSCAR WILDE  
*Ballad of Reading Gaol*

THE SHIP APPEARED first as a dot low on the horizon. The television cameras immediately picked it up. At first the ship did not give the impression of motion; it seemed to hover motionless and swell in size. Then in a few seconds it passed the first television station, the screaming roar of its passage rocking the camera slightly.

Thirty miles beyond, its belly skids touched the packed New Mexican sand. An immense dust cloud stirred into life at the rear of the ship and spread slowly across the desert.

As soon as the ship touched, the three helicopters took off to meet it. The helicopters were ten miles away when the ship halted and lay motionless. The dust began to dissipate rearward. The late afternoon sun distorted the flowing lines of the ship and made it look like some outlandish beast of prey crouched on the desert.

As the lead helicopter drew within a mile of the ship, its television camera caught the ship clearly for the first time. Telephoto lenses brought it in close, and viewers once again watched closely. They looked admiringly at the stubby swept-back wings and at the gaping opening at the rear from which poured the fires of hell itself. But most of all they looked to the area amidship where the door was.

And as they watched, the door swung open. The sun slanted in and showed two figures standing there. The figures moved to a point just inside the door and stopped. They stood there looking out, motionless, for what seemed an interminable period. Then the two figures looked at each other, nodded, and jumped out the door.

Though the sand was only four feet below the sill of the door, both men fell to their knees. They quickly arose, knocked the dust from their clothes, and started walking to where the helicopters were waiting. And all over the country people watched that now-familiar moon walk—the rocking of the body from side to side to get too-heavy feet off the ground, the relaxed muscles on the down step where the foot just seemed to plop against the ground.

But the cameras did not focus on the general appearance or action of the men. The zoom lenses went to work and a close-up of the faces of the two men side by side flashed



across the country.

The faces even at first glance seemed different. And as the cameras lingered, it became apparent that the difference was in the eyes: a level-eyed expression, undeviating, penetrating, probing, yet laden with compassion. There was a look of things seen from deep inside, and of things seen beyond the range of normal vision. It was a far look, a compelling look, a powerful look set in the eyes of normal men. And even when those eyes were closed, there was something different. A network of tiny creases laced out from both corners of each eye. The crinkled appearance of the eyes made each man appear older than he was, older and strangely wizened.

The cameras stayed on the men's faces as they awkwardly walked toward the helicopters. Even though several dignitaries hurried forward to greet the men, the camera remained on the faces, transmitting that strange look for all to see. A nation crammed forward to watch.

In Macon, Georgia, Mary Sinderman touched a wetted finger to the bottom of the iron. She heard it pop as she stared across her ironing board at the television screen with the faces of two men on it.

"Charlie. Oh, Charlie," she called. "Here they are."

A dark, squat man in an undershirt came into the room and looked at the picture. "Yeah," he grunted. "They got it all right. Both of 'em."

"Aren't they handsome?" she said.

He threw a black look at her and said, "No, they ain't." And he went out the door he had come in.

In Stamford, Connecticut, Walter Dwyer lowered his newspaper and peered over the top of it at the faces of two men on the television screen. "Look at that, honey," he said.

His wife looked up from her section of the paper and nodded silently. He said, "Two more, dear. If this keeps up, we'll all be able to retire and let them run things." She chuckled, and nodded and continued to watch the screen.

In Boise, Idaho, the Tankard Saloon was doing a moderate business. The television set was on up over one end of the bar. The faces of two men flashed on the screen. Slowly a



silence fell over the saloon as one person after another stopped what he was doing to watch. One man sitting in close under the screen raised his drink high in tribute to the two faces.

In a long, low building on the New Mexican flats, the wall TV set was on. A thin young man wearing heavy glasses sat stiffly erect on a folding chair, watching the two faces. "Dr. Scott," he said, "they both have the look."

The older man nodded wordlessly.

"Do you think you'll be able to find out anything this time, Dr. Scott?" young Webb asked.

A slight urge to tell this young man to keep his big fat mouth shut rose up in Dr. Scott. He noted the urge and filed it away with other urges toward bright young men who believe everything they learned at college, and no more.

"I don't know, Dr. Webb," he said. "We've examined sixteen of these fellows without finding out anything so far."

The two men boarded a helicopter. The screen faded to a blare of martial music, and then came to life on a toothy announcer praising the virtues of a hair shampoo. Webb snapped the set off, turned to Scott, and said, "Of course, you've isolated all the factors resulting from your system of selection?"

Scott clamped his teeth down on the bit of his cold pipe. He took time to strike a match and puff it back to life, and then he was able to answer calmly, "Yes, of course. The first ten men we chose were not selected by the same standards we use now. Two of them died on the Moon, but the same ratio of those who returned developed the far look. The change in the selection system seems to effect survival—but not the 'far look.' "

"Then it must be something that happens *to* them. Don't all these men go through some experience in common?"

"*All* the men go through a great many experiences in common," Scott answered. "They go through two years of intensive training. They make a flight through space and land on the Moon. They spend twenty-eight days of hell reading instruments, making surveys, and collecting samples.



They suffer loneliness such as no human being has ever known before. Their lives are in constant peril. Each pair has had at least one disaster during their stay. Then they get their replacements and come back to Earth. Yes, they have something in common all right. But a few come back without the far look. They've improved; they're better than most men here on Earth. But they are not on a par with the rest."

Webb was at the window, watching for the first sign of the helicopter. He shook his head, unconvinced. "We're missing something. Somewhere there's an element that's missing. And, consciously or unconsciously, these men know what it is."

Scott took the pipe from his mouth and said softly, "I doubt it. We've pumped them full of half a dozen truth drugs. We've doped them and subjected them to hypnosis. Maybe they're concealing something but I doubt it very much."

Webb shook his head again, and turned from the window. "I don't know. There's something missing here. I certainly mean to put these subjects through exhaustive tests."

The anger in Scott brought a flush to his face. He crossed the room toward Webb and touched him on the lapel of the coat with the stem of his pipe as he said, "Look here, young fella, these 'subjects' as you call them are like no subjects you ever had or conceived of. These men can twist you and me up into knots if they want to. They understand more about people than the entire profession of psychiatrics will learn in the next hundred years."

He put the pipe in his mouth and said, more gently, "You are in for a shock, Dr. Webb. These two particular men are fresh from the Moon, and do not yet fully realize the impact they have on other . . ." The murmur of approaching motors stopped him. "You'd best get yourself ready for an experience, Dr. Webb," he said. The murmur grew to a roar as the helicopters landed outside the building. In a moment footsteps sounded outside in the hall and the door opened.

Two men walked into the room. The taller of the two



looked at Webb and Webb felt as if struck by a hot blast of wind. The level eyes were brilliant blue and seemed to reach into Webb and gently strum on the fibers of his nervous system. A sense of elation swept through him. He felt as he had once felt standing alone at dusk in a wind-tossed forest. He could not speak. His breath stopped. His muscles held rigid. And then the blue-eyed glance passed him and left him confused and restless and disappointed.

He dimly saw Scott cross the room and shake hands with the shorter man. Scott said, "How do you do. We are very glad for your safe return. Was everything in order when you left the Moon?"

The shorter man smiled as he shook Scott's hand. "Thank you, doctor. Yes, everything was in order. Our two replacements are off to a good start." He glanced at the taller man. They looked at each other, and smiled.

"Yes," said the taller man, "Fowler and McIntosh will do all right."

Don Fowler and Al McIntosh still had the shakes. After six days they still had the shakes whenever they remembered the first few moments of their landing on the Moon.

The ship had let down roughly. Fowler awkwardly climbed out through the lock first. He turned to make sure McIntosh was following him and then started to move around the ship to look for the two men they were to replace.

The ship lay near a crevice. A series of ripples in the rock marred the black shiny basalt surface that surrounded the crevice. The surface was washed clean of dust by the jets of the descending ship. As Fowler walked around the base of the ship his foot stepped into the trough of one of the ripples in the rock. It threw him off balance, tilted him toward the crevice. He struggled to right himself. Under Earth gravity he would simply have fallen. Under Lunar gravity he managed to retain his feet, but he staggered toward the crevice, stumbling in the ripples, unable to recover himself.

McIntosh grabbed for him. But with arms flailing, body



twisting, feet groping, Fowler disappeared down the crevice. McIntosh staggered behind him; his feet skidded on the ripples in the hard, slick basalt. He, too, bobbed to the lip of the crevice and toppled in.

Thirty feet down the crevice narrowed to a point where the men could fall no farther. Fowler was head down and four feet to McIntosh's left. They were unhurt but they began to worry when a few struggles showed them how firmly the slick rock gripped their spacesuits. The pilot of the spaceship, sealed in his compartment, could not help them. The two men they were to replace might be miles away. The radios were useless for anything but line-of-sight work. So they hung there, waiting for something—or nothing—to happen.

Fowler spoke first. "Say, Mac, did you get a chance to see what the Moon looks like before you joined me down here?"

"No. I had sort of hoped you'd noticed. Now we don't have a thing to talk about."

Silence, then: "This is one for the books," said Fowler. "Can you see anything? All I can see is the bottom of this thing and all I can tell you is it's black down there."

"No. I can't see out. I have a nice view of the wall, though. Dense, igneous, probably of basic plagioclase. Make a note of that, will you?"

"Can you reach me?"

"No. I can't even see you. Can you—"

"What are you fellows doing down there?" A new voice broke into the conversation. Neither Fowler nor McIntosh could think of an answer. "Stay right there," the voice continued, with something suspiciously like a chuckle in it. "We'll be down to get you out."

The pinned men could hear a rock-scraping sound through their suits. Two pairs of hands rocked each man free of the walls. McIntosh was the first to be freed and he watched with close interest the easy freedom of movement of the two spacesuited figures as they released Fowler, turned him right side up, and lifted him up to where he could support himself in the crevice. All four then worked their way up the slick walls by sliding their backs up one



wall while bracing their feet against the opposite wall.

The two men led Fowler and McIntosh around to the other side of the spaceship and pointed westward across Mare Imbrium. One of them said, "About half a mile over there behind that rise you'll find the dome. About eight miles south of here you'll find the latest cargo rocket—came in two days ago. The terrain is pretty rough so you'd better wait a few days to get used to the gravity before you go after it. We left some hot tea for you at the dome. Watch yourselves now."

They all solemnly shook hands. The clunk of the metallic-faced palms of the spacesuit and the gritty sound of the finger, wrist, and elbow joints made hand-shaking a noisy business in a spacesuit.

Both Fowler and McIntosh tried to see the faces of the two men they were replacing, but they could not. It was daytime on the Moon and the faceplate filters were all in place. Their radio voices sounded the same as they had on Earth.

Fowler and McIntosh turned and carefully and awkwardly moved westward away from the ship. A quarter of a mile away they turned to watch it and for the first time the men had the chance to see the actual moonscape.

Pictures are wonderful things and they are of great aid in conveying information. Words and pictures are often adequate to impart a complete understanding of a place or event. Yet where human emotions are intertwined with an experience mere words and pictures are inadequate.

It might well be that on Earth there existed similar wild wastelands, but they were limited, and human beings lived on the fringes, and human beings had crossed them, and human beings could stand out on them unprotected and feel the familiar heat of day and the cold of night. Here there was only death for the unarmored man, swift death like nothing on Earth. And nowhere were there human beings, nor any possibility of human beings. Only the darker and lighter places, no color, black sky, white spots for stars, and the moonscape itself nothing but brilliant gray shades



of tones between the white stars and the black sky.

So Fowler and McIntosh, knowing in advance what it would be like, still had to struggle to fight down an urge to scream at finding themselves in a place where men did not exist. They stared out through the smoked filters, wide-eyed, panting, fine drops of perspiration beading their foreheads. Each could hear the harsh breath of the other in the earphones, and it helped a little to know they both felt the same.

A spot of fire caught their attention and they turned slightly to see. The spaceship stood ungainly and awkward with a network of pipes surrounding the base. The spot of fire turned into a column, and the ship trembled. The column produced a flat bed of fire, and the ship rose slowly. There was no dust. A small stream of fire reached out sideways as a balancing rocket sprang to life. The ship rose farther, faster now, and Fowler and McIntosh leaned back to watch it. Once it cleared the Moon's horizon it lost apparent motion. They watched it grow smaller until the fire was indistinguishable with the stars, then they looked around again.

It was a little better this time, since they were prepared for an emotional response. But now they were truly alone. Without knowing what they were doing, they drew closer together until their spacesuits touched. The gentle thud registered in each consciousness and they pressed together for a moment while they fought to organize their thoughts.

And then McIntosh drew a long deep breath and shook his head violently. Fowler could feel the relief it brought. They moved apart and looked around.

McIntosh said, "Let's go get that tea they mentioned."

"Right," said Fowler. "I could use some. That's the dome there." And he pointed west.

They headed for it. They could see the dome in every detail; and as they approached, the details grew larger. It was almost impossible to judge distances on the Moon. Everything stood out with brilliant clarity no matter how far away. The only effect of distance was to cause a shrinking in size.



The dome was startling in its familiarity. It was the precise duplicate to the last bolt of the dome they had lived in and operated for months in the hi-vac chambers on Earth.

The air lock was built to accommodate two men in a pinch. They folded back the antennas that projected up from their packs and they crawled into the lock together; neither suggested going in one at a time. They waited while the pump filled the lock with air from the inside; then they pushed into the dome itself and stood up and looked around.

Automatically their eyes flickered from one gauge to another, checking to make sure everything was right with the dome. They removed their helmets and checked more closely. Air pressure was a little high, eight pounds. Fowler reached out to throw the switch to bring it down when he remembered that a decision had been made just before they left Earth to carry the pressure a little higher than had been the practice in the past. A matter of sleeping comfort.

"How's the pottet?" asked McIntosh. His voice sounded different from the way it had on Earth.

Fowler noted the difference—a matter of the difference in air density—as he crossed the twenty-foot dome and squatted to look into a bin with a transparent side. The bin bore the label in raised letters, Potassium Tetraoxide.

On Earth, water is the first worry of those who travel to out-of-the-way places. Food is next, with comfort close behind depending on the climate. On the Moon, oxygen was first. The main source of oxygen was potassium tetraoxide, a wonderful compound that gave up oxygen when exposed to moisture and then combined with carbon dioxide and removed it from the atmosphere. And each man needed some one thousand pounds of the chemical to survive on the Moon for twenty-eight days. A cylinder, bulky and heavy, of liquid air mounted under the sled supplied the air make-up in the dome. And a tank of water, well insulated by means of a hollow shiny shell open to the Moon's atmosphere, gave them water and served in part as the agent to release oxygen from the pottet when needed.

The dome checked out and by common consent both men



swung to the radio, hungry for the reassuring sound of another human voice. McIntosh tuned it and said into the mike, "Moon Station to Earth. Fowler and McIntosh checking in. Everything in order. Over."

About four seconds later the transmitter emitted what the two men waited to hear. "Pole Number One to Moon. Welcome to the network. How are you, boys? Everything shipshape? Over."

McIntosh glanced at Fowler and a vision of the crevice swam between them. McIntosh said, "Everything fine, Pole Number One. Dome in order. Men in good shape. All's well on the Moon. Over."

About three seconds' wait, then: "Good. We will now take up Schedule Charlie. Time, 0641. Next check-in, 0900. Out." McIntosh hung up the mike quickly and hit the switches to save power.

The two men removed their spacesuits and sat down on a low bench and poured tea from the thermos.

McIntosh was a stocky man with blue eyes and sandy hair cut short. He was built like a rectangular block of granite, thick chest, thick waist, thick legs; even his fingers seemed square in cross section. His movements were deliberate and conveyed an air of relentlessness.

Fowler was slightly taller than McIntosh. His hair and eyes were black, his skin dark. He was lean and walked with a slight stoop. His waist seemed too small and his shoulders too wide. He moved in a flowing sinuous manner like a cat perpetually stalking its prey.

They sipped the hot liquid gratefully, inhaling the wet fragrance of it. They carried their cups to the edge of the dome and looked out the double layer of transparent resin that served as one of the windows. The filter was in place and they pushed against it and looked out.

"Dreary looking place, isn't it?" said Fowler.

McIntosh nodded.

They sipped their tea, holding it close under their noses when they weren't drinking, looking out at the moonscape, trying to grasp it, adjusting their minds to it, thinking of the days ahead.



They finished, and Fowler said, "Well, time to get to work. You all set?"

McIntosh nodded. They climbed into their spacesuits and passed through the lock, one at a time. They checked over the exterior of the dome and every piece of mechanism mounted on the sled. Fowler mounted an outside seat, cleared with McIntosh, and started the drive motor. The great sled, complete with dome, parabolic mirror, spherical boilers, batteries, antennas, and a complex of other equipment rolled slowly forward on great, sponge-filled tires. McIntosh walked beside it. Fowler watched his odometer and when the sled had moved five hundred yards he brought it to a halt. He dismounted and the two of them continued the survey started months back by their predecessors.

They took samples, they read radiation levels, they ran the survey, they ate and slept, they took more samples. They kept to a rigid routine, for that was the way to make time pass, that was the way to preserve sanity.

The days passed. The two men grew accustomed to the low gravitation, so they recovered the cargo rocket. Yet they moved about with more than the usual caution for Moon men. They had learned earlier than the others that an insignificant and trivial bit of negligence can cost a man his life. And as time went by they became aware of another phenomenon of life on the Moon. On Earth, in an uncomfortable and dangerous situation, you become accustomed to the surroundings and can achieve a measure of relaxation. Not on the Moon. The dismal bright and less-bright grays, the oppressive barrenness of the gray moonscape, the utter aloneness of two men in a gray wilderness, slowly took on the tone of a gray malevolence seeking an unguarded moment. And the longer they stayed the worse it became. So the men kept themselves busier than ever, driving themselves to exhaustion, sinking into restless sleep, and up to work again. They made more frequent five-hundred-yard jumps; they expanded the survey; they sought frozen water or frozen air deep in crevices, but found only frozen carbon dioxide. They kept a careful eye on the pottet, for hard-working men



consume more oxygen, and the supply was limited. And every time they checked the remaining supply they remembered what had happened to Booker and Whitman.

A pipeline had frozen. Booker took a bucket of water and began to skirt the pottet bin. The bail of the bucket caught on the corner of the lid of the bin. Booker carelessly hoisted the bucket to free it. The lid pulled open and the canvas bucket struck a corner and emptied into the bin. Instantly the dome filled with oxygen and steam. The safety valves opened and bled off the steam and oxygen to the outside, where it froze and fell like snow and slowly evaporated. The bin ruptured from the heat and broke a line carrying hydraulic fluid. Twenty gallons of hydraulic fluid flooded the pottet, reacting with it, forming potassium salts with the silicone liquid, releasing some oxygen, irretrievably locking up the rest.

Booker's backward leap caromed him off the ceiling and out of harm's way. After a horrified moment, the two men assessed the damage and calmly radioed Earth that they had a seven-Earth-day supply of oxygen left. Whereupon they stocked one spacesuit with a full supply of the salvaged pottet and lay down on their bunks. For six Earth days they lay motionless; activity consumes oxygen. They lay calm; panic makes the heart beat faster and a racing blood stream consumes oxygen.

For four days slightly more than two thousand men on Earth struggled to get an off-schedule rocket to the Moon. The already fantastic requirements of fuel and equipment needed to put two men and supplies on the Moon every month had to be increased. The tempo of round-the-clock schedules stepped up to inhuman heights; there were two men lying motionless on the Moon.

It lacked but a few hours of the seven days when Booker and Whitman felt the shudder that told them a rocket had crash-landed near by. They sat up and looked at each other, and it was apparent that Whitman had the most strength left. So Booker climbed into the spacesuit while Whitman lay down again. And Booker went out to the crashed rocket feeling strong from the fresh oxygen in the spacesuit. He



scraped up pottet along with the silica dust and carried it in a broken container back into the dome. Whitman was almost unconscious by the time Booker got back and put water into the pottet. The two men lived. And by the time their replacements arrived the dome was again in as perfect condition as it had been. Except there was a different type of cover on the pottet bin.

So Fowler and McIntosh worked endlessly, ranging far out from the dome on their survey. The tension built up in them, for the worst was yet to come. The long Lunar day was fast drawing to a close, and night was about to fall, a black night fourteen Earth-days long.

"Well, here it comes," said McIntosh on the twelfth Earth-day. He pointed west. Fowler climbed up on the hummock beside him and looked. He saw the bottom half of the sun mashed by a distant mountain range and a broad band of shadow reaching out toward them. The shadow stretched as far north and south as he could see.

"Yes," said Fowler. "It won't be long now. We'd better get back."

They jumped down from the hummock and started for the dome, samples forgotten. At first they walked, throwing glances back over their shoulders. The pace grew faster until they were traveling in the peculiar ground-consuming lope of men in a hurry under light gravity.

They reached the dome and went in together. Inside they removed their helmets and McIntosh headed for the radio. Fowler dropped a hand on his shoulder and said, "Wait, Mac. We have half an hour before we're due to check in."

McIntosh picked up a cloth and wiped his wet forehead, running the cloth through his sandy hair. "Yes," he said. "You're right. If we check in too soon they'll worry. Let's make some tea."

They removed their suits and brewed two steaming cups. They sat down and sipped the scalding fluid and slowly relaxed a little.

"You know," said Fowler, "it's right about now that I'm glad we have an independent water supply. Repurified stuff



would begin to taste bad about now."

McIntosh nodded. "I noticed it a day or two ago. I think I'd have trouble if the water weren't fresh." And the two men fell silent thinking of Tilton and Beck.

Tilton and Beck had been the second pair of men on the Moon. Very little water was sent up in those days, only enough for make-up. Tiny stills and ion-exchange resins purified all body waste products and produced a pure clear water. Tilton and Beck had lived on that water for weeks on Earth and they, along with dozens of others, had pronounced it as fit to drink as spring water.

Then they went to the Moon. Two Earth-days after night fell Beck thought the water tasted bad. Tilton did, too. They knew the water was sweet and clean, they knew it was imagination that gave the water its taste, but they could not help it. They reached a point where the water wrenched at their insides; it tasted so foul they could not drink it. Then they radioed Earth for help, and began living off the make-up water. But Earth was not as experienced in emergency rocket send-offs in those days. The pleas for decent water for the men on the Moon grew weaker. The first rocket might have saved them, except its controls were erratic and it crash-landed five hundred miles from the dome. The second rocket carried the replacements, and when they entered the dome they found Tilton and Beck dead, cheeks sunken, skin parched, lips cracked and broken, dehydrated, dead of thirst. And within easy reach of the two dried-out bodies was twenty-five gallons of clear, pure—almost chemically pure—tasteless, odorless water, sparkling bright with dissolved oxygen.

Fowler and McIntosh finished their tea and radioed in at check time. They announced that night had overtaken them. A new schedule was set up, one with far more frequent radio contacts. And immediately they set about their new tasks. No more trips far from the dome, no surveying. They broke the telescope from its cover and set up the spectrometer. Inside the dome they converted part of the drafting table to a small but astonishingly complete analytical chem-



ical laboratory.

The planners of the Moon survey from the very beginning recognized that night on the Moon presented a difficult problem. So they scheduled replacements to arrive when the Moon day was about forty-eight hours old. Thus the men had twelve Earth-days of sunlight to get ready for the emotional ordeal of the long night. Such a system insured that the spaceship landed on the Moon in daylight and also allowed optimum psychological adjustment. Shorter periods of residence on the Moon were not feasible, since the full twenty-eight days were needed to prepare for the shuttle flight from Earth to the space station, from the space station to the Moon, and return. Then, too, at least one supply rocket a month had to be crash-landed within easy walking distance of the dome. The effort and money expended by the United States to do these things were prodigious. But future property rights on the Moon might well go to the nation that continuously occupied it.

Fowler looked up from adjusting the telescope and said, "Look at that, Al." His arm pointed to the Earth brightly swimming in a sea of star-pointed blackness.

They saw the Western Hemisphere, white-dotted with clouds, and a brilliant blinding spot of white in the South Pacific off the coast of Peru where the ocean reflected the sun's light to them.

McIntosh said, "Beautiful, isn't it? I can just about see Florida. Good old Orlando. I'll bet the lemon blossoms smell good these days. You know, it looks even better at night than it does in day."

Fowler nodded inside his helmet. "You know, we've certainly gone and loused up a good old tradition."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, picture it. A guy and his girl go out walking in the moonlight down there. They'd sigh and feel all choked up and gaze at the Moon. Now when they look up they know there's a couple of slobs sprinting around up here. It must take something away."

"I'll bet," chuckled McIntosh.

Fowler dropped his gaze to the moonscape and looked



around and said, "It sure looks different here at night."

They studied the eerie scene. As always, it showed nothing but varying shades of gray, but now the tones were dark and foreboding. The sharp, dim starlight and soft earthshine threw no shadows but spread a ghostly luminescence over ridge and draw alike. It was impossible to tell just where the actual seeing left off and the imagination began.

Fowler muttered, almost under his breath, "The night is full of forms of fear."

"What?"

"The night is full of forms of fear. It's a line I read some place."

They looked around in silence, turning the ungainly spacesuits. McIntosh said, "It sure describes this place."

Several Earth-days passed. The two men kept busy making astronomical observation and checking out some of the minerals collected during the long day. They made short trips out into the region around the dome but they took no samples; they let the scintillation counters built into their suits do the probing for hot spots as they simply walked around. And often while they were outside striding through the moondust on their separate paths, one of them would say, "How're things?" And the other would say, "O.K., how're things there?" The urge to hear a human voice rose powerful and often.

It was on one of these outside trips that their first real panic occurred. The two men were each about a hundred yards away from the dome and on opposite sides. McIntosh did not notice a telltale slight dip in the dust where a shallow crack lay almost filled with light flourlike particles. His foot went in. He twisted and fell on his back so that his caught leg would bend at the knee and not wrench the knee-joint of the suit. He hit with a jolt; his forward speed added to the normal speed of fall. The impact was not great but it clanged loudly inside the suit. McIntosh grunted, and said "damn," and sat up to free his foot. Fowler's voice sounded in his headphones. "You O.K., Mac?"

"Yeah," said McIntosh. "I fell down but I'm not hurt a



bit. Things are fine."

"Mac," Fowler's voice was shrill. "You O.K.?"

"Yes. Not a thing wrong. Just took a—"

"For God's sake, Mac, answer me." Fowler's voice was a near scream, panic bubbling through it.

The fear was contagious. McIntosh yanked his foot out of the crevice, leaped to his feet, and ran for the dome shouting, "What is it, Walt. What's the matter. I'm coming. What is it?" And as he ran he could hear Fowler screaming now for him to answer.

McIntosh rounded the dome and almost collided with Fowler coming in the opposite direction. The two slipped and skidded to a halt, clouds of dust kicking up around their feet and settling as fast as they rose. Once stopped, the two men jumped toward each other and touched helmets.

"What is it, Walt?" shouted McIntosh.

"What happened to you?" came Fowler's voice, choked, gasping. McIntosh could hear it both through the helmet and through his headphones. It sounded hollow.

McIntosh shouted again. "I took a little spill, that's all. I told you I was all right over the set. Didn't you hear me?"

"No." Fowler was getting himself under control. "I kept calling you and getting no answer. Something must be wrong with the sets."

"Yeah. It's either your receiver or my transmitter. Let's go in and check them out."

They entered the dome together and removed their suits. They wiped the sweat from their faces and automatically started to make tea, but they stopped. Power was in short supply during the night and hot water had to be held to a minimum. So they checked the radios instead.

They went over McIntosh's transmitter first, since he had had the fall. They soon found the trouble. A tiny grain of silica had shorted a condenser in the printed circuit. It was easily fixed and then the transmitter worked again. They put on the suits and went outside. But the shock they suffered was not so easily remedied. And thereafter when they were outside they were never out of sight of each other.

Time went by. The looming loneliness of the brooding



moonscape closed ever more tightly around them. Their surroundings took on the stature of a living thing, menacing, waiting, lurking. Even the radio contacts with Earth lost much of their meaning; the voices were just voices, not really belonging to people.

On Earth a man can be deep in a trackless and impenetrable jungle, yet there is a chance a fellow human being will happen by. A man can be isolated on the remotest of desert islands and still maintain a reasonable hope that a ship, or canoe, or plane will carry another human being to him. A man sentenced to a life of solitary confinement knows for certain that there are people on the other side of the wall.

But on the Moon there is complete aloneness. There are no human beings and—what is worse—no possibility of any human beings. And never before had men, two men, found themselves in such a position. The human mind, adaptable entity that it is, nevertheless had to reach beyond its boundaries to absorb the reality of perfect isolation.

The lunar night wore on. Fowler and McIntosh were out spreading their dirty laundry for the usual three-hour exposure to Moon conditions before shaking the clothes out and packing them away 'til they were needed again.

Fowler straightened up and looked at the Earth for a moment, then said, "Mac, did you ever eat in a diner on a train?"

"Sure, many times."

"You remember how the headwaiter seated people?"

McIntosh thought for a moment then said, "I know what you mean. He keeps them apart. He seats individuals at empty tables until there are no more empty tables; then he begins to double them up."

"That's it. He preserves the illusion of isolation. I guess people don't know how much they need one another."

"I guess they don't. People are funny that way."

They grinned at each other through the faceplates, although it was too dark to see inside the spacesuits. They finished spreading the laundry and went into the dome together. Both of them had recently come to realize a striking



thing. If one of them died, the other could not survive. It was difficult enough to preserve sanity with two. One alone could not last an Earth-day. The men on the Moon lived in pairs or they died in pairs. And if Fowler and McIntosh had thought to look at each other closely, they would have noticed a few incipient lines radiating from the eyes. Nothing striking, nothing abnormal, and certainly nothing as intense as the far look. Just the suggestion of a few lines around the eyes.

The night had only two Earth-days to run. Fowler and McIntosh for the first time began to turn their thoughts to the journey home, not with longing, not with anticipation, but as a possibility of something that might happen. The actuality of leaving the Moon seemed too unreal to be true. And the cold harsh fact was that the rocket might not come; it had happened before. So though they dimly realized that in a mere four Earth-days they might leave the grim grayness behind, they were not much concerned.

A series of observations ended. Fowler and McIntosh sipped hot tea, drawing the warmth into their chilled bodies. Fowler sat perched on one end of a bench. McIntosh cupped the teacup in his hands and stood looking out at the lowering moonscape, wishing he could pull his eyes from it, too fascinated by its awfulness to do so. There was complete silence in the dome.

"Don." The word came as a gasp, as though McIntosh had called the name before he had completely swallowed a mouthful of tea.

Fowler looked up, mildly curious. He saw McIntosh drop the teacup, saw it bounce off the floor. He saw McIntosh straining forward, taut, neck muscles standing out, mouth open, one hand against the clear plastic.

"Don. *I saw something move out there.*" The words were shrill, harsh, hysteria in every syllable.

Fowler landed beside him in a single leap and looked, not out the window, but at his face. At the staring, terror-filled eyes, the drawn mouth, Fowler threw his arms around McIntosh's chest and squeezed hard and said, "Easy, Mac,



easy. Don't let the shadows get you. Things are all right."

"I tell you I saw something. A sudden movement. Near that hillock but at a greater range and to the right. Something moved, Don." And he inhaled a great shuddering gasp.

Fowler kept his arms around McIntosh and looked out. He saw only the jagged dim surface of the Moon. For a long moment he looked out, listening to McIntosh's gasping breath, a chill fear slowly rising inside him. He turned his head to look at McIntosh's face again, and as he did he caught a flicker of motion out of the corner of his eye. He dropped his arms and jerked his head back to look out as McIntosh screamed, "There, there it is again, but it's moved."

The two men, both panting, strained at the window. For a full minute they stood with every muscle pulled tight, gulping down air, perspiration prickling out of their scalps and running down over face and neck. Their eyes saw fantastic shapes in the sharp dim light but their minds told them it was imagination.

Then they saw it clearly. About one hundred yards straight out in front of the window a tiny fountain of moondust sprayed upward and outward from a glowing base that winked out as swiftly as it appeared. Like the blossoming of a death-colored gray rose, the dust from a handsbread of surface suddenly rose and spread outward in a circle and just as suddenly fell back to the surface.

"What is it?" hissed Fowler.

"I don't know."

They watched, the tension so great that they shuddered. They saw another one, bigger, out farther and to the left. They watched. Another, small, in much closer, the brief white base instantly flashing through shades of deeper reds and disappearing.

"Spacesuits," gasped Fowler. "Get into the spacesuits."

And he turned and jumped to the rack, McIntosh alongside him. They slipped into the cumbersome suits with the swift smoothness of long practice. They twisted the helmets on.



"Radio O.K.?" said McIntosh.

"Check. Let's look."

And the two jumped back to the window. The activity outside seemed to have stopped. They watched for six full minutes before they saw another of the dust fountains. After they saw it, they twisted their suits to look at each other. They were bringing themselves under control, trying to reason out a cause for what they saw.

"Any ideas?" said McIntosh.

"No," said Fowler. "Let's try the other windows."

They took up separate places at the two remaining windows.

"See anything?"

"Nothing. Just that hideous-looking terrain. I guess it's all on the other— Wait. There's one. Way out. I could just—"

"I've got one, too," said Fowler. "It's all around us. Let's call Earth."

They moved over to the radio. Fowler turned the volume high and McIntosh hit the On switch. Almost immediately they heard a voice, mounting swiftly in loudness. "Station Number One to Moon Station. Station Number One to Moon Station." Over and over it repeated the words.

McIntosh touched a microphone to his helmet, flipped the Transmit switch and said, "Moon Station to Station Number One. We hear you. Over."

"Thank God," came the voice. "Listen. The Leonid meteor swarm may hit you. Find cover. Find a cave or bridge and get out of the open. Repeat. Meteor swarm may hit you. Find cover. Over."

At the word "meteor" McIntosh swung to face Fowler. The two moved closer together to see into the faceplates. Each face broke into a smile of relief at the knowledge of what was happening.

McIntosh touched the microphone to his helmet and said, "We're already in it. There is no cave or other shelter within forty miles. How long do you expect the shower—"

There was a thunderous explosion and a brilliant flash of light, that seared the eyeballs of both men. Something heavy



dropped on them and gently clung to the spacesuits. They struggled futilely against the softness that enfolded them. McIntosh dropped the microphone and flailed his arms. Fowler sought to lift off the cloying substance; he dropped to one knee and fought it, but it would not give. Both men fought blind; the caressing enfolding material brought complete blackness.

McIntosh felt something grip his ankle and he lashed out with his foot. He felt it crash against something hard, but something that rolled with his kick and then bore back against his legs and knocked him over. His arms were still entangled in the material but he tried to flail the thing that crawled on top of him. With a superhuman effort he encircled the upper portion of the thing with layers of the soft material and began to squeeze. Through the thickness of the material he felt the familiar outline of a helmet with a short flexible antenna reaching up from the back. And he realized he was fighting Fowler.

"Mac, it's me. The dome's punctured and fallen in on us. You hear me?"

"Yes," said McIntosh, gasping for air. "I didn't know what happened. You all right?"

"Yes. Let's get out of here. Shoulder to shoulder 'til we find the lock. Let's go."

They crawled side by side, lifting the heavy leaded plastic in front of them. They bumped into the drafting table and oriented themselves. They passed out through the useless lock and stood up outside and looked at the dome. It is a terrible thing when a man's home is destroyed. But on Earth a man can go elsewhere; he has relatives, friends, to turn to. His heart may be heavy, but his life is not in peril.

Fowler and McIntosh looked at their collapsed dome and doom itself froze around their hearts. They stood alone on a frozen, shadow-ridden, human-hating world. They stood hand in hand with death.

They looked at the collapsed dome and the way it lay over the equipment they knew so well, softening the sharp angles, filling in the hollow spaces in the interior. The equipment outside looked stark and awkward, standing high, sil-



houetted against the luminous grayness. The antenna caught McIntosh's eye.

He swallowed heavily and said, "Let's radio Earth and give them the news. We were talking to them when we got hit."

Fowler dumbly followed him to a small box on the far side of the sled and watched him remove the mike and receiver from a small box. McIntosh faced out from the sled and held the receiver against one side of the helmet and the mike against the other. Fowler slipped behind him. They stood back to back, helmets touching, McIntosh doing the talking, Fowler operating the switches and listening to all that was said. The receiver was silent when Fowler turned it on. Earth was listening, waiting. He switched to Transmit and nudged McIntosh.

"Moon Station to Space Station Number One. Over."

In five seconds a voice came back. "Pole Station to Moon Station. Space Station Number One is out of line of sight. What happened? You all right?"

"Yes. Meteor punctured dome. We're outside. Over."

It was considerably more than five seconds before the voice came back, quieter but more intense. "Can you fix it?"

"We don't know. We'll go over the damage and talk to you soon. Out."

McIntosh dropped his hands and Fowler turned the switch off. "Well," said McIntosh, "we'd better see how bad it is. They may want to call the whole thing off."

Fowler nodded. Getting the sled and dome and equipment to the Moon had called for prodigious effort and staggering cost. It could not be duplicated in a hurry. Their replacements were already on the way. The dome had to be operating if they were to stay. And the spaceship could only carry two men back.

"Let's look it over," said Fowler. As they turned to climb up on the sled a fountain of dust sprang up ten feet to their right. They looked out over the sullen moonscape; the meteors were still falling. But they didn't care. They climbed up on the sled and carefully picked their way on top of the collapsed material to where they had been standing when



the meteor struck. They pulled out several folds and found the hole. They inspected it with growing excitement.

The hole was a foot in diameter, neatly round. Around the perimeter was a thick ridge charred slightly on the inner edge where the thermoplastic material had fused and rolled back. The ridge had strengthened the material and prevented it from splitting and tearing when the air in the dome rushed out. The hole in the inner layer measured about eighteen inches in diameter and the encircling ridge was even thicker.

Fowler held the hand-powered flashlight on the material surrounding the holes while he examined it carefully. "Mac," he said, "we can fix it. We've got enough scrap dome plastic to seal these holes. Let's see if the meteor went out the bottom."

They moved the holes around on the floor of the dome and found a four-inch hole through the plastic floor. Looking down it, they could see a small crater in the Moon's surface half-filled with a white solid.

McIntosh said, "It went through one of the batteries, but we won't miss it. We've got some scrap flooring plastic and some insulation around. We can fix this, too. Our make-up air is in good supply. Don," he stood up, "we're gonna make it."

"Yes," said Fowler, letting the light go out. "Let's radio Earth."

They went back to the set and Fowler reported their findings. They could hear the joy come back in the man's voice as he wished them luck and told them an extra rocket with make-up air would be on the way soon. "What about the meteor shower?"

Fowler and McIntosh looked around; they had forgotten the meteors again. They could see the spurts of moondust clearly against the gray and black shadows.

"They're still falling," said Fowler. "Nothing to do but sweat them out. Call you later. Out." And he and McIntosh sat down. A nation sweated it out with them. An entire people felt fear strike at their hearts at the thought of two men sitting beside a collapsed dome amidst a shower of invisible



cosmic motes traveling at unthinkable speeds. But there was no way for anyone to be of the slightest aid to the two men on the Moon.

Quiet they sat and dumb. The meteors, forgotten for a moment, were now a challenge to the very presence of men in such a place. A mere light touch from a cosmic pebble, and a human life would snuff out. A touch on the hand, the foot, is enough; it would take so little. They were something apart from the human race, men, yet not men. For no man could be so alone, such a speck, a trifle, a nothing, so alone were they. Quiet they sat and dumb. But each man's heart beat thick and quick like a madman on a drum. And the meteors fell.

"Mac."

"Yes."

"Why do we sit here? Why don't we fix it?"

"Suppose it gets hit again?"

"Suppose it does. It'll be hit whether it's collapsed or full. At least we'll have these holes patched. Maybe it'll be easier for the next team—"

McIntosh stood up. "Of course," he said. "We can get that much done no matter what happens."

Fowler stood up and began to turn to the sled to climb up. A tiny spot of brightness suddenly appeared on McIntosh's left shoulder. With a feeling of blackness closing in on his body, Fowler flung himself at McIntosh and clamped a hand over the spot where the glow had been. The weight of his body knocked McIntosh down but Fowler clung to him, kept his hand pressed firmly against the spot where the meteor had hit.

"Mac," said Fowler with the taste of copper in his mouth. "Mac. Can you hear me?"

"I hear you fine. What's the matter with you? You like to scared me to death."

"You got hit. On the left shoulder. Your suit must be punctured. I've got my hand over it."

"Don, I didn't even feel it. There can't possibly be a hole there or I'd have felt the air go, or at least some of it. Take a look."



They got to their feet. Fowler kept his hand in place while he retrieved the flashlight. He got it going and quickly removed his hand and showed the light over the spot to look. At first he saw nothing, so he held his helmet closer. Then he saw it. A tiny crater so small as to amount to nothing beyond a slight disturbance of the shiny surface of the suit. Smaller than the head of a pin it was and not as deep as it was broad.

He let the light go out and said in a choked voice, "Must have been a small one, smaller than a grain of sand. No damage at all."

"Good. Let's get to work."

They cut out two four-foot squares of dome material and several chunks of flooring plastic. They filled the bottom of the hole in the floor with five inches of insulation. They plugged in a wedge-shaped soldering iron and melted the plastic and worked it in to the top three inches of flooring, making an under-cut to seal the hole solidly. And the floor was fixed.

Fowler pulled over the squares of dome material while McIntosh adjusted the temperature of the iron to that just below the melting point of the material. Fowler placed the first square inside the hole in the inner layer. He ran the hot blade around the ridge of fused plastic. It sealed well; the thick, leaded, shiny, dome material stiffly flowed together and solidified. Fowler sealed the patches in place with a series of five fused circles concentric to the hole and spaced about three inches apart. The inner hole was hard to work with, for he had to reach through the outer hole, but he managed it. The outer hole went fast. And when they finished they were certain that the dome was as good as ever.

They stood up from their work and looked around. Out onto the moonscape they looked long and carefully. And nowhere could they see one of the dread dust fountains. Slowly and carefully they walked to the edge of the sled and dropped off. They sat down and looked some more, carefully preventing their imaginations from picturing things more fantastic than what was already there. After ten minutes



there was no doubt about it, the meteor shower was over.

"Let's blow her up," said Fowler.

McIntosh checked the heated outlet from the air cylinder and then passed current through the coils that heated the cylinder itself. At his O.K., Fowler cracked the valve and air began to flow into the dome. They watched it carefully as it rose, looking for the tell-tale white streams that told of a leak. There were none detectable in either layer. And in half an hour the dome stood full and taut with a good five pounds pressure inside. They went in through the lock together.

McIntosh started the light tube while Fowler began a check of the gauges. In ten minutes it was apparent that things were in order. The dome was warming up too, so they took off their helmets, keeping a wary eye on the gauges. Soon they took off their suits.

The radio was still on, so Fowler called in to Earth that everything was in order. The voice was warm and friendly, congratulating them on their work and passing on the reassurances of men everywhere. They learned that their replacements were on schedule, so far.

The two men looked up at the patch on the ceiling, with its corners dangling downward. They looked at each other and Fowler started to make tea. McIntosh walked to a window and as he got there his feet started to slip out from under him. He caught himself and bent to see what he had slipped on. He found a thin sheet of ice on the floor.

"Where'd this come from?"

Fowler looked over and smiled. "That's from the cup of tea you dropped when you saw the first meteor. Remember?"

"Oooh, yes." And McIntosh chipped it up and put it in the waste pot to be purified and used on the pottet.

They had their tea, and they slept long and restlessly. They picked up their work schedule, and very soon they could see the brightness on the mountain tops to the west. The sun was coming back.

But it brought no joy. They were beyond any emotional response to night or day. Bright gray or dark gray, it did not matter. It was still the Moon.



On the second Earth-day of sunlight they spoke to the approaching spaceship and made preparations to leave. The laundry was all done and ready for use. The dome was tidy. Their last job was to brew tea and put it in the thermos to keep hot for their replacements.

They donned their spacesuits for the last time on the Moon and went out the lock together to watch the little flame in the black sky grow larger.

The ship landed and the dust settled immediately. Fowler and McIntosh walked slowly toward the ship; they did not hurry. The door in the side opened, a ladder dropped out, and two suited figures climbed awkwardly to the Moon's surface.

Before they had a chance to look around, McIntosh called, "Over here. The dome is over here."

The four men came together and shook hands noisily. Fowler said, "You can see the dome." He pointed to it a half mile away. "We've left some hot tea for you there. The terrain is pretty rough so watch yourself moving around for a few days. Good luck." They shook hands. The replacements headed for the dome while Fowler and McIntosh went to the ship and climbed in without looking back. They dogged home the lock, removed their suits, stretched out on the acceleration bunks, and called "O.K.," into the intercom.

"Right," said the pilot from his compartment. "Welcome aboard and stand by."

In a moment they felt the acceleration, steadily mounting. But it soon eased off, and they slept. For most of the five-day journey they slept. And if they had thought to look at each other during their few waking hours, they would have seen nothing unusual—a few incipient, almost invisible lines around the eyes, nothing more. Neither Fowler nor McIntosh had the far look.

The ship reached the space station and tied to it. Fowler and McIntosh transferred to the shuttle and swiftly dropped toward Earth. They heard the air whistle as it thickened.

The television cameras first picked up the ship as a small dot. People the world over craned forward to watch as the



bellyskids touched the sand—people who did not know that the ship carried two Moon men who did not have the far look. The people watched the ship skid to a halt amid a slowly settling cloud of dust.

And as they watched, the door amidships swung in. The sun slanted in through the door and showed two figures standing there. The figures moved to a point just inside the door and stopped. They stood there motionless, looking out for what seemed an interminable period.

As Fowler and McIntosh looked out the door, they saw the shimmering sands of the New Mexican desert. But they saw more than that. They saw more than home. They saw the spawning-place of the human race. In a roaring rush of recognition, they knew they had done more than simply return to Earth. They had rejoined the human race. They had been apart and were now one again with that brawling, pesky, restless race in which all were brothers, all were one. This was not a return to Earth. This was a return to the womb, to the womb that had nourished them and made them men. A flood of sympathy and heart-felt understanding poured through them as they stared out at the shimmering sands. The kinks and twists of personality fell away and left men of untrammelled mind.

Fowler and McIntosh looked at each other, nodded, and jumped out the door. They fell to their knees in the unaccustomed gravity. They quickly arose, knocked the dust from their clothes, and started walking to where the helicopters were waiting.

The zoom lenses on the television cameras went to work and the faces of Fowler and McIntosh side by side flashed across the country.

And the eyes were different. A network of deep tiny creases laced out from both corners of each eye. The crinkled appearance of the eyes made each man appear older than he actually was. And there was a look in those eyes of things seen from deep inside. It was a far look, a compelling look, a powerful look set in the eyes of normal men.



# WHEN GRANDFATHER FLEW TO THE MOON

by E. L. Malpass

This story was first brought to my attention by that most congenial of fellow literary scavengers, Anthony Boucher. I read it, loved it, and wrote immediately to *MacLean's* to inquire about the author and the rights.

Over a period of several months, and a jagged course of interference-running in correspondence with agents and publishers and publishers' agents, I succeeded in acquiring the rights, and learning nothing at all about the author—but a good deal about the story. Prior to its Canadian publication, *Grandfather* appeared in a British anthology "A.D. 2500," a collection of prize-winners from a contest run by the *London Observer*. And previous to that (or so someone told someone at *MacLean's* who told it to me) it seems to have appeared in "a house organ of Barclay's Bank."

I do not know anything about Mr. Malpass or Barclay's Bank; nor can I imagine what sort of banking institution would employ the sort of person I visualize the author of this story to be. I have my own thoroughly American cinema-eye's-view of what a proper British bank, or banker, or bank clerk, *should* be, and I can only assume that Barclay's was motivated, as am I, to overlook a few irregularities (such as original publication in 1955, and *three* previous reprints) when the occasion, and the story, warrant it. This is, in any case, the first American publication.

A.D. 2500

THAT WAS THE YEAR they brought the Electric to Pen-y-Graig Farm.

Wonderful it was, when Grandfather Griffiths pressed



down the switch, and the great farm kitchen was flooded with light. There was Dai my father, and Mother, blinking and grinning in the light, and Electric-Plumber Williams, smug as you please, looking as though he had invented the Electric himself and sent it through the pipes. Only Gran was sad. Tears streaming down her face, she picked up the old paraffin lamp and carried it sadly out into the scullery.

That was funny about Gran. She was progressive, and left to herself she would have filled the house with refrigerators and atomic cookers and washers. But Grandfather called these things devil's inventions, and would have none of them. And yet, when Grandfather at last agreed to the Electric, Gran was in tears. Reaction, Auntie Spaceship-Repairs Jones said it was.

"Well," roared Grandfather. "There's your Electric. But don't think that because you've talked me into this you'll talk me into any more of these devil's inventions. Let no one mention the word spaceship in my presence ever again."

That was intended for Gran. In her black clothes she was a rather pathetic-looking little woman, and no match at all for her fiery husband. But one thing she had always insisted that she wanted—a spaceship—and it had been a source of argument between them for years.

I tell you all this that you may know that we of Pen-y-Graig are not the backward savages that some people would have you believe. We are in touch with modern thought, even though we are apt to cling to the old ways. But what I really remember of those far-off golden days of 2500 is of how the first Expedition to the Moon set off, and of how it landed in Ten Acre Field, and of the strange events that followed.

Men had been trying to set off for the Moon for years, perhaps for centuries. But you know how it is. Something always happened to stop them. The weather was bad, or someone's auntie died, or there was an eclipse. In the autumn of 2500, however, they were ready at last.

It was cold that evening, and we were sitting by the fire, enjoying the Electric. Grandfather was listening in; suddenly he jumps to his feet and shouts, "Blasphemy."



No one took much notice, for if the old man didn't jump up and shout, "Blasphemy," at least once of an evening Gran thought he was sickening and gave him a purge.

So Gran said dutifully, "What is it, Mortimer?"

"Flying to the Moon, they are," he cried. "The spaceship has just left London. And they're dancing in the streets, and exploding fireworks in celebration. Sodom and—"

But at that moment there was a noise as of a great wind passing over, and then a terrible crash as though someone had picked up all our milk churns and dropped them on the Dutch barn. We ran outside, and there, in Ten Acre Field, a Thing was glinting in the frosty moonlight. Huge it was, like a great shining rocket.

Grandfather looked at it. "Lost their way, maybe," he said with malicious satisfaction. Then he felt in his waistcoat pocket and took out a card and put it in my hand.

"Run you, Bronwen," he said, "and give them the business card of Uncle Spaceship-Repairs Jones."

But I was frightened, being but a little girl then, and clung to my mother's skirts. So Dai my father started up the tractor without a word, and rode off to fetch Uncle Spaceship-Repairs Jones.

Down to the farm came the Moon Men, as the newspapers called them, their helmets bright in the moonlight, and soon Dai my father arrived. My uncle was sitting on the tractor with him, clutching a great spanner and grinning as pleased as Punch, and soon his banging and hammering came across the still air from Ten Acre.

One of the Moon Men took off his great helmet.

"Bit my tongue when we landed sudden," he said.

"Nothing to what you will bite when you land on the Moon," said my grandfather.

"That is what I am thinking," the man replied. "And that is why I say they can have their old Moon. Back to Golders Green by first train it is for me."

The leader took off his helmet at that. "Go to the Moon one short?" he cried. "That would never do."

"I will go in his place," said Dai my father quietly.

"You go? Never," roared my grandfather. "No son of



mine shall go gallivanting round among the planets."

My father flushed angrily. But no one argued with Grandfather, and at that moment we heard Uncle Spaceship-Repairs Jones holloing that the Moon Ship was now as right as ninepence.

The Moon Men, all except the one who had bitten his tongue, set off for Ten Acre.

"I will come and see you off," said Grandfather, and we watched him walk up the hill with the men.

With a great roar the Moon Ship rose into the sky, and climbed among the stars. Soon we could see it no more.

"Supper now," said Gran.

We got the meal ready, and then someone said, "Where is Grandfather?"

All the grownups looked uneasy, and suddenly I was frightened and began to cry.

"Gone to talk to the old bull, maybe," said Gran.

Silently my father picked up the lantern and went out into the fields. It was a long time before he came back.

"Gone," he said. "Clean as a whistle."

No one said anything.

Grandfather did not come back all night. Nor the next day.

Gran was worried.

Then, at dusk, Read-All-About-It Evans, instead of dropping our evening papers from his helicopter as he flew past, landed. He marched into the house and thrust the paper under my father's nose, and said, "See you."

"Octogenarian on Moon," said big headlines. Then, below: "Radio flash from Moon party says Mortimer Griffiths, elderly Welsh farmer, took place of member of crew injured in earth landing."

"Well, there is sly for you," said my father. "Going out for five minutes and finishing up on the Moon."

Gran said nothing. But she went to the pegs and got her coat and went out of the door.

"Go with her, Bronwen," my father ordered me, but kindly.

When I got outside it was almost dark, but a big full Moon



was just swinging clear of the hill, and I could see Gran going along the path that leads up Break Back and past Ten Acre and brings you to the Little Mountain. Though I was only a child I knew where Gran was going, and why. At the top of Little Mountain she would be nearer to the Moon than anywhere. I also felt, child though I was, that she would want to be alone, so I followed quietly, at a short distance.

Sure enough, Gran kept on up the mountain, and at last we were on the top place where there is nothing but broken rocks, and holes of black water, and lonely old ghosts. And the Moon was well up now, and so near that you felt that if you stood on tiptoe you could touch it like an apple on the tree.

Gran looked at the Moon. And the Moon looked at Gran.

Now Grandfather was a big man, and I knew she was hoping to see him, perhaps putting up a little tent, or lighting a Primus. But there was no sign of anyone on the Moon's face. And at last, after a long time, Gran shivered and sighed. Then she muttered, "Round at the back, maybe," and she turned and came slowly down the mountain. And though she must have seen me she said no word.

The next night the same thing happened. At moonrise Gran set off for the mountain, and I followed. But this time the Moon was not quite round, and Gran looked at it for a long time. Then she said, "Shrinking it is," and came home again.

This happened every night. The Moon grew thinner and thinner, and Gran went out later and later. Young though I was, they let me stay up till all hours to follow Gran up the mountain. But at last the Moon rose so late that Dai my father said, "Bed for you tonight, my girl."

But I awoke in the small hours, and looked out, and there was the Moon, a thin, silver sickle, and there was the yellow light of a lantern climbing the dark side of the sleeping mountain.

I put on my coat and ran out into the cold.

When I reached the top of the mountain Gran was there. To my surprise she spoke to me. Pointing to the thin crescent she said, "Hanging on by his fingernails now he will be,"



and she took my hand and led me home.

The next evening she said to my father, "What time does the Moon rise tonight, Dai?"

My father looked at the paper.

"There is no Moon tonight, Gran," he said.

"No Moon," repeated Gran in a voice of death. "No Moon." She rose and hung a black cloth over the big picture of Grandfather at the Eisteddfod.

"Falling through the sky he will be now," she said slowly, as though speaking to herself. "Like a shooting star he will fall, and like a shooting star he will cease to be." She went back to her chair and sat down, her hands folded in her lap.

"But the fact that you can't see the Moon doesn't mean it isn't there," my father explained. "It's just that the sun is shining on the other side of it."

Gran gave him a look. "Black midnight," she cried. "Black midnight, and you talk to me of sunshine. Open the door." She pointed an ancient finger at it. "And, if the sun is shining, run up Snowdon barefoot I will, like the mad woman of Aberdaron."

Dai my father gave up. There was a silence. Then Gran began talking again, almost to herself.

"He was a hard man," she said. "I didn't much care for him. Never would he buy me anything. A spaceship, only a little one, I asked him for, many times.

"'No mention of spaceships in the Lives of the Great Saints,' he says, smiling nasty, putting the tips of his fingers together, smug as you please. 'No mention of indoor sanitation either,' I say, real angry now. 'But that do not stop Rev. Williams having a little room up at the Manse.'"

"But it was no good. There was no arguing with Mortimer Griffiths." She rose and went to bed. And the next day she left for Aberystwyth and married Llewellyn Time Machine.

They went to 1954 for their honeymoon. And two days after they had gone Grandfather came back from the Moon.

"Finished the harvest?" he asked.

"Yes," said my father.

"Have you mended the fence in Ten Acre?"

"Never mind the fance in Ten Acre," said my father.



"Gran has married Llewellyn Time Machine."

That was a terrible moment. For a long time my grandfather stood stroking his beard. Then suddenly he shot out his long arm and grasped a chopper.

"Where are they?" he roared. "Where are they?"

My father, pale, said nothing.

Grandfather seized him by the throat and shook him.

"Where are they?" he repeated.

"In—in 1954," gasped my father.

Grandfather let him go. "Get the tractor out," he ordered.

"Where are you going?"

"1954," said Grandfather.

He was gone for nearly a week.

Then he came back, alone. He was in a good mood, quite talkative for him.

"Hired a Time Machine in Llandudno," he said, beaming. "Chased them right back to the Middle Ages. Llewellyn caught the Black Death. And I smashed his Time Machine to pieces with my little chopper."

"And Gran?" asked my father.

"Stranded in the Middle Ages, with no money, and no means of getting back," said Grandfather with immense satisfaction. "She was taking the veil when I last saw her. Damp the nunnery looked. Damp and cold.

"Teach her to go hankering after spaceships," said my grandfather.



## THE DOORSTOP

by R. Bretnor

Almost all of Reginald Bretnor's fiction, prior to the past year, has been "funny"—if so boisterous a word can be applied to the loving laughter with which the author directs us to regard the naked souls of his subjects.

During 1956 Mr. Bretnor published two perfectly serious stories, both of them distinguished by the same qualities of perceptiveness, compassion, and literacy that have made his humor memorable. "The Past and Its Dead People," in *F&SF*, was to my mind the finest single story to appear in any science-fantasy magazine during the year. Unfortunately, it was neither fantasy nor science-fiction, and could not validly be included in this anthology. "The Doorstop," from *Astounding*, represents, so far as I know, Bretnor's first venture into straight science-fiction.

DR. CAVANESS scarcely heard the metallurgist and the chemist reading their detailed technical reports. He tried to look at them, he tried to fasten his attention on their words. But always his glance drifted, to the square, strong face of the Air Force major general sitting across from him, off to the vast industrial landscape of Detroit framed in the window of the Directors' Room, back to the other faces there—back to the thing, the Doorstop, bronze-bright and dumbbell-shaped, isolated in its bell jar, alone on the polished plain of brown mahogany. And always, refusing discipline, his mind shied from close contact with the here and now, where the Doorstop had undeniable reality, where these men were gathered with their cold answer to the riddle he did not want to solve.



Occasionally a fragment of a phrase came through to him—*And when the oxidation rate . . . as yet unanalyzed . . . a rare-earth compound or*—And every fragment sent his mind to seek a refuge in his memories, to find him pictures of a world gardened with all the good, familiar things, a world safe in the narrow limits set by common sense, a world to which the shadow of the Doorstop could never penetrate.

His mind recalled the moment forty years ago when he and Eleanor had found their first kiss floating on the sweet night air, and shared it, there on the cool brick porch, spontaneously. The stars were close. The friendly stars were winking points of light, as small as glowworms, as near, as intimate. Nightfall created them; at daybreak they dissolved. And there had been no need to think of them, of what they really were. Not then. Then there had been no Doorstop.

His mind touched fear, and anger at the fear. Immediately it flipped the pages of the past, pages of friends and fishing trips, of midnight calls to childbirth, hypochondria, surgery—pages of precious trials and triumphs and routines. That was his life, the busy hours, the days succeeding days, the months, the seasons, the gently moving years, all compassed by his family, his patients, and his town. That was his world, expanding rarely to include a little of Detroit; more rarely still, three weeks in California or in Canada; and sometimes, unavoidably, admitting through its walls the harsh awareness of wars abroad, of strange barbarities in stranger lands—of dark realities that had to stay unreal.

The voices in the unreal present lectured on, the chemist first, the metallurgist next, using the long-linked words of their technologies. Dr. Cavaness's mind, escaping them, found him the safety of a day when he was twelve, rising excitedly at dawn, mounting his new red bike, whistling his happy dog, riding green-bordered, unpaved roads out to his uncle's farm. He let himself be drawn into that day: there was the calm white house, the barn, the sunlit hill, and there was Uncle Matt shouting hello at him—and Uncle Matt was going to show him where beavers had built themselves a dam across the creek—and—



The picture vanished. Abruptly, cruelly, he was seventeen, and Uncle Matt was dead. The funeral service in the afternoon, the coffin covered with the flowering earth, the solemn, silent supper afterward—all this was over; he lay awake in bed, sadly and quietly understanding it. Lying there, he thought of how the minister had spoken of eternity. He tried to puzzle out the meaning of the word, tried really hard—and suddenly he seemed to *see* the endless years, innumerable, incomprehensible, receding to a frozen void that strangled sanity. Fear seized him, and anger at the fear, anger at this rude violation of his world by vastnesses less understandable than death. He called on God to drive the mystery out, extinguish it—but God, appallingly, had grown too great, unthinkably remote, as inconceivable as all the wastes of Time. Desperately, then, young Howard Cavaness had wrestled the idea, thrusting it out beyond the wall again, denying its existence to himself—

The scene receded suddenly, surrendering to another, more vivid, stronger still. It was an autumn night a year ago, cold, crystal-clear; and he and Eleanor were driving home after the show, after a dull main feature and a short or two. One of the shorts had been about astronomy, about the giant telescope at Palomar, how it was built and used, and what it saw. The narrator had spoken of the moon, the sun, the planets near and far, of light that reached the earth in seconds, minutes, hours. He had discussed the nearest stars, a few light-years away; the nearest neighboring galaxies, seen as they were a million years before; the myriad island universes each with its own infinity of suns, stretched to the ends of space, a billion years remote—a thousand million years, each single one of which meant six quadrillion miles. To Dr. Cavaness, the numbers had been words and nothing more. He scarcely thought about them as he drove, leaving the glare of neons far behind, turning into the shadowed, winding road that crossed the hill. Finally they reached the crest. He saw the sky. From end to end, it was alive with light.

Somehow he stopped the car. Just as it had when he was



seventeen, the Mystery and its magnitude seized into him. Deep in his soul, his brain, the marrow of his bones, he felt the dreadful distances between the stars.

At the Directors' Table, Dr. Cavaness forced his eyes to open, his clenching hands under its edge to part. Deliberately he forced himself to look around, to see the general's face, the long-familiar face of young Ted Froberg, his one-time partner's son, the listening faces of scientists, engineers, and men from government. Inanely his mind echoed the first comment it had made on his arrival: "Look at the big-shots—pretty fast company for a small-town G.P.!" He tried again to laugh a little at himself for having been impressed, and found no laughter. He made his glance move on—on past the Doorstop—discovering with a curious sense of shock that the mineralogist had resumed his seat, and that farther down a different man, a biophysicist from Princeton, was talking now. Immediately his mind shut out the words; immediately it took him back a week in time, back to his first acquaintance with the Doorstop—when it had been just that and nothing more.

He saw it there again, holding the door ajar as he had seen it then—a twelve-inch dumbbell on a five-inch cone, corroded green as any Roman sword, as any sunken galleon's gun dredged from the sea. He saw the clouded crystal hemispheres at either end, obscured by dust which could not quite obscure two pinpoint brilliancies. Entering, he halted; put his golf clubs down. He felt the strangeness of its lines and curves. Frowning, he pushed it with his foot, finding it heavier than it ought to be. Annoyance rose in him, at Eleanor, cluttering the house with all these antiques.

"Hello?" he called to her. "Ellie, what is this thing?"

Her voice replied out of the kitchen, "Did you have a good game, dear? I'm glad you're back for lunch." Drying her hands, she came into the hall. "What thing? Oh, *that*. I got it just today from Mrs. Hobbs. It's . . . well, it's a doorstep." She kissed him. "You don't mind, do you, dear? I only had to pay four-fifty for it, after all."



"Ellie, that's not what I mean. I can see you're *using* it for a doorstep. I mean, what *is* it? What was it meant to be originally?"

She laughed. "Goodness, I don't know. It looks awfully old. Maybe it's something off a sailing ship—one of those things they wrapped the ropes around."

He knelt. He turned it carefully over on its side. "Could be," he said. "Gosh knows it weighs enough. But if it is, what are those two glass ends for, and these holes reaching up into it right next to them? And what's that sort of socket in its base?" Uneasily, the feeling of its strangeness grew on him. Somehow it wasn't *right*. It didn't fit.

Shaking his head, he put the Doorstop back against the door. He rose.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"I don't know. I just don't like the thing. It . . . it's *queer*."

"Oh, don't be superstitious." She laughed at him. "Perhaps they got it off a Chinese ship, a junk or something. What difference does it make? Anyhow, now it's just a doorstep."

Taking his arm, she led him off to lunch, where there were other matters to discuss.

After that he had said nothing more about it. Three or four times a day, going in or out, he had paused to look at it, experiencing the same sensation of uneasiness. On each occasion he had shrugged, telling himself that it was hers, that if she liked it that was all right with him.

Then, three evenings later, instantaneously, all this had altered. It was a hot, dull evening under a sweltering sky, and he was waiting for her in the hall. The Doorstop stood against the big front door, holding it open to welcome in any unlikely breeze. The tiny focal points of light at the exact center of its now polished hemisphere gleamed in the curdling dusk. The sun's departure had not diminished them. They shone more brightly than they had before. They shone—

And suddenly, before his eyes, they changed.

They did not move; there was no movement visible. The inner one, the one toward the hall, had disappeared. The



other, which had been pointing straight out through the door, was now displaced by forty-five degrees. It pointed outward still, but to the sky.

He saw. For several seconds he did not understand. And then the first chill wave of comprehension struck at him. He had assumed those minute brilliancies to be reflections of the outer light; he had ignored their immobility. They shone where light was not; they were *inside* the hemispheres. They were inside the Doorstop, and part of it, part of its armored and mysterious purposes. It was no simple artifact. Alien to him and strange, it was a mechanism, a machine.

The Doorstop stood there against the door. He stared at it. The questions sounded in his skull. What was it? What was it made to do? Where was it from? The questions and the contradictions hammered him—its thick corrosion, as though it were a thing out of past ages before machines were born; the wrongness of its planes and curving surfaces; the two infinitesimal fires shifting fast as thought. He stood there staring at the Doorstop, and felt an answer stirring in his mind, stirring like something vast and dark and cold beneath the summer surface of the sea. Instantly, angrily, he rejected it.

When Eleanor came down the stairs to join him, he told her nothing. They drove to dinner; they returned; finally they went to bed. And all the while, withdrawn into himself, he fought the obstinate irrationalities, trying to bend them to familiar shapes, seeking an answer native to his world.

He found it. It lay there ready-made, compounded for him out of the threat of war, out of repeated rumors, tensions, secrecies—the paper perils of the day and year, cooned in headlines which could be torn and burned and thrown away. In these, he told himself, the Doorstop had had its origin. Men had conceived it. Men had employed the magic of their sciences to give it form and plan its functioning. Somewhere, in the not-yet-believable mythology of arming for destruction and defense, it had its place.

He thought of guarded factories, locked laboratories, of dangerous knowledge, spies and counter-spies. The mystery was explained; he was relieved of the necessity for explana-



tion, for doubt, for further thought. The Doorstop was a simple thing, as understandable as friend or enemy, as easily acted on. Whatever knowledge it might yield should either be protected from all eyes or torn from it. He thought of Teddy Froberg, grown up now, an electronics engineer working behind the ramparts of Security. Young Ted would know about the Doorstop; where it belonged; how to dispose of it.

He told himself all this repeatedly; each repetition was a stone to seal the chasm menacing his world, to seal away that other answer still pressing upward to his consciousness. He wrapped himself in certainty. Imagining the military importance of the Doorstop, he let himself enjoy the thrill of touching great affairs. He chuckled at the thought of how surprised young Ted would be. After a time, he slept.

Next morning, after breakfast, he called on Mrs. Hobbs, the antique dealer, and questioned her. Peevishly she assured him that everything in *her* shop was come by honestly, that he was welcome to go right over and ask that Cory boy, who'd sold it to her.

He went right over; and the Cory boy, snatching a four-bit bribe, told him that he had found the Doorstop down near the railroad tracks, half buried in the ground where there had been a sort of fire.

Afterward he drove into Detroit.

At the Directors' Table, Dr. Howard Cavaness recalled how the expression on Ted Froberg's face had changed at the unwrapping of the Doorstop, how he himself had been surprised at that astonishment. He recalled going home and telling Eleanor, too frequently, never to say a word to anyone. He recalled the noncommittal questioners, civilian, military, who had come to them, to Mrs. Hobbs, and to the Cory boy. And he remembered how, during those few days, the shadow of disquiet had attended him, waiting for moments when his guard was down—how it had crept upon him in his sleep, in the cold, drifting dreams where Uncle Matt was dead, and lost, and irretrievable in the immensities of time and space—



Once more, in anger, his mind repelled the thought. Once more it framed his still-life of reality, letting him clutch the safety painted there. He felt his forearms press the hard brown wood. He felt the quickened beating of his heart, and frowned. Words reached him, and he raised his head. He knew the voice. He recognized his name.

“. . . Our gratitude to Dr. Cavaness—”

He looked up to the left, over the bell jar and the Doorstop. Ted Froberg was the speaker now. Tall, seriously intense, he stood behind his chair.

“. . . Who, even though his background isn't technical, recognized the importance of the instrument. I guess I don't need to tell you what a lucky thing *that* was.” He paused. He grinned at Dr. Cavaness. “That's about all,” he said. “If there are any questions, I'll try to answer them.”

Then, gathering his courage in his hands, Dr. Cavaness spoke. “Well, how about it, Ted?” he asked. “Now that you've got it figured out, what *is* that gadget? What country is it from?”

He waited. Only the fall of silence answered him. He saw young Froberg's grin erase itself. He felt the quick, astounded glances gossiping.

“You mean I get three guesses?” He laughed aloud.

And no one echoed him.

There was a whispering round the table; its volume grew; three or four men started to speak at once. Raising his hand, young Froberg quieted them. “Wait,” he said softly, soberly. “I've known Dr. Cavaness all my life. I think I understand.”

He sat down on the table's edge, leaned over toward Dr. Cavaness. “Look, Dr. Howie, let me go over this again. I'll outline it. We don't know what this object is, or what it's for, or even what it's made of—at least, not accurately. They'll probably learn more back East, with their facilities. However, we've found out what it *does*. Believe me, that's enough to hold us for a while.”

He was explaining slowly, patiently; and Dr. Cavaness endured the invading words, trying to listen to them separately, to isolate them from their sentences, to quench their meaning before it reached his mind.



Ted Froberg pointed at the Doorstop; he no longer seemed so very young. "When you first brought it to us, we looked it over pretty carefully. We found those two holes in the dumbbell ends—remember them? Well, they're T-shaped. Inside, at each end of the cross, there is a knob. They're cupped and knurled, like push buttons. But they weren't made for fingers, Dr. Howie. Fingers can't get at them. They're for—something else."

Dr. Cavaness forbade the thought to form. Against it he braced the trembling walls that held his world to its perspectives and accustomed measurements. He wiped the perspiration from his palms.

"We pushed the buttons; nothing happened," Froberg said. "We rigged a business to push all four at once—and the whole thing opened up, and there was all this *stuff*. It was beyond us; it made no sense at all. We didn't dare to disassemble anything for fear of wrecking it. We took some specimens, as small as possible. We tried to run analyses, and some of them succeeded. They were unbelievable; we couldn't even guess at physical conditions where manufacturing such materials would be possible."

Dr. Cavaness saw the excitement in his eyes, and shrank from it.

"Our next step followed logically. Those points of light had shifted by themselves. Besides, the socket in the base seemed to contain contact elements. We carried through a series of experiments. We found out that the points of light respond at least to radar frequencies; when you were watching them, they must've picked up a reflection from a plane, and followed it. We also found that, when this happens, the hemispheres set up a weird sort of field that propagates at half a light-velocity—and that there's something else inside that reacts to gravitational and magnetic gradients. Each of these functions modifies the others, and at the output end they're translated into the damndest wave-forms we've seen yet. The oddest part of all is that there simply is *no* source of power."

Dr. Cavaness listened—and in the final fastness of his heart he prayed. Voicelessly, in a despairing language with-



out words, he prayed to a parochial God to make this all untrue, to wipe it out, to let his world remain as it had been. *Oh, God, preserve these small peripheries against all things incomprehensible; I am my world; its limits limit me; allow the stretches of eternity, the darknesses, to stay unreal; oh, God, deny this living proof that life unthinkable teems in those depths and distance, that they exist—*

“Look, Dr. Howie,” Froberg cried, “we don’t know what they *use* it for—perhaps in navigation, or to direct a weapon of some sort. But we’re certain of one thing—and that may be a little hard to take. It wasn’t made in any country here; it wasn’t even made on Mars or Jupiter. *It’s from the stars.*”

Here was the answer, stated and defined. Here was the looming nightmare made real. Here was the naked Universe. Dr. Cavaness saw it. He held it still at bay. For moments out of time, time ceased. His mind turned inward, clawing the substance of his dissolving world, trying to fabricate one last escape. He thought of the corrosion which had encased the Doorstop. He thought of Chinese bronzes, ancient urns, green with their many-centuried burial in the earth. The past had vanished; there was safety in the past—

“Well, anyhow,” said Dr. Cavaness, “I guess it’s been a long, long time since *they* were here—two or three thousand years. It takes that long to get a chunk of bronze all rusted up like that. At least that long, Ted, doesn’t it?”

Ted Froberg looked at him. “It isn’t bronze,” he said. “That’s why we have it in that bell jar there, pumped full of helium, sealed. Maybe corrosion would take all that time, back in *their* atmosphere. But not in ours. *In ours, it took three weeks.*”

And Dr. Cavaness sat silently; he stared straight ahead—facing the majesty of God, facing a new maturity for man, facing the open door.



## SILENT BROTHER

by Algis Budrys

It is *not* true that Algis Budrys uses forty-seven different pen names; nor is it correct to say that *all* the best stories in *all* the s-f magazines are his. Both these rumors are wild exaggerations, and this anthology stands in proof of it. With the exception of two authors, one of whom I am reasonably certain lives in Wales, Great Britain, and the other in Chicago, U.S.A. (Budrys is from Jersey), I can personally vouch for the independent existence of every other writer in this book.

The facts in the Budrys case are sufficiently sensational. Over the past two years, writing under four bylines (that I know of, including "Paul Janvier," who wrote this story, and his twin brother, Ivan), he has filled an astonishing number of printed pages with an astonishing variety of material, ranging in quality from just-good to knockout.

THE FIRST STARSHIP was home.

At first, the sight of the *Endeavor's* massive bulk on his TV screen held Cable's eager attention. At his first glimpse of the starship's drift to its mooring, alongside a berthing satellite, he'd felt the intended impression of human grandeur; more than most viewers, for he had a precise idea of the scale of size.

But the first twitch of ambiguity came as he watched the crew come out and cross to the Albuquerque shuttle on their suit jets. He knew those men: Dugan, who'd be impatient to land, as he'd been impatient to depart; Frawley, whose white hair would be sparsely tousled over his tight pink scalp; Snell, who'd have run to fat on the voyage unless he'd exer-



cised like the very devil and fasted like a hermit; young Tommy Penn, who'd be unable to restrain his self-conscious glances into the cameras.

It was exactly those thoughts which dulled his vicarious satisfaction. He stayed in front of the set, watching through the afternoon, while the four men took off their suits and grouped themselves briefly for the still photographers, while they got past the advance guard of reporters into the shuttle's after compartment, and refused to speak for the video coverage.

It made no essential difference that Snell was lean and graceful, or that all four of them, Frawley and Penn included, were perfectly poised and unruffled. Perhaps it was a little more irritating that they were.

*Endeavor's* crew was stepping gracefully into history.

The cameras and Cable followed the four men out of the shuttle and across the sun-drenched field at Albuquerque. Together they watched every trivial motion; Dugan's first cigarette in six months; Frawley's untied shoelace, which he repairing by casually stopping in the middle of the gangway and putting a leg up on the railing; Tommy Penn giving a letter to a guard to mail.

Together with a billion other inhabitants of what was no longer Man's only planet, Cable looked into the faces of the President of the United States, of the United Nations Secretary General, of Premier Sobieski, and Marshal Siemens. Less than others, because he had a professional's residual contempt for eulogies, he heard what they had to say.

By nine or nine-thirty that night he had gathered the essential facts about the solar system of Alpha Centaurus. There were five planets, two of them temperate and easily habitable, one of them showing strong hints of extensive heavy metal ores. The trip had been uneventful, the stay unmarked by extraordinary incident. There was no mention of inhabitants.

There was also no mention of anything going wrong with the braking system, and that, perhaps, intensified the crook that had begun to bend one corner of Cable's thin mouth.

"You're welcome," he couldn't help grunting as Frawley



described the smoothness of the trip and the simplicity of landing. That decelerating an object of almost infinite mass within a definitely finite distance was at all complicated didn't seem to be worthy of mention.

More than anything, it was the four men's unshakable poise that began to grate against him.

"Happens every day," he grunted at them, simultaneously telling himself he'd turned into a crabby old man at thirty-four, muttering spitefully at his friends for doing what he no longer could.

But that flash of insight failed to reappear when his part in *Endeavor's* development was lumped in with the "hard-working, dedicated men whose courage and brilliance made our flight possible." Applied to an individual, phrases like that were meaningful. Used like this, they covered everyone from the mess hall attendants to the man in charge of keeping the armadillos from burrowing under the barrack footings.

He snapped the set off with a peevish gesture. Perhaps, if he stayed up, the program directors, running out of fresh material at last, might have their commentators fill in with feature stuff like "amazing stride forward in electronics," "unified field theory," "five years of arduous testing on practical application to spaceship propulsion," and the like. Eventually, if they didn't cut back to the regular network shows first, they might mention his name. Somebody might even think it important that *Endeavor* had cost the total destruction of one prototype and the near-fatal crash of another.

But suddenly he simply wanted to go to bed. He spun his chair away from the set, rolled into the bedroom, levered himself up and pulled his way onto the bed. Taking his legs in his callused hands, he put them under the blankets, turned off the lights, and lay staring up at the dark.

Which showed and told him nothing.

He shook his head at himself. It was only twenty miles to the field from here. If he was really that much of a glory-hound, he could have gone. He was a dramatic enough sight. And, in all truth, he hadn't for a minute been jealous while the *Endeavor* was actually gone. It was just that today's pane-



gyrics had been a little too much for his vanity to stave off.

He trembled on the brink of admitting to himself that his real trouble was the feeling that he'd lost all contact with the world. But only trembled, and only on the brink.

Eventually he fell asleep.

He'd slept unusually well, he discovered when he awoke in the morning. Looking at his watch, he saw it had only been about eight hours, but it felt like more. He decided to try going through the morning without the chair. Reaching over to the stand beside his bed, he got his braces and tugged them onto his legs. Walking clumsily, he tottered into the bathroom with his canes, washed his face, shaved, and combed his hair.

He'd forgotten to scrub his bridge last night. He took it out now and realized only after he did so that his gums, top and bottom, were sore.

"Oh, well," he told himself in the mirror, "we all have our cross to bear."

He decided to leave the bridge out for the time being. He never chewed with his front teeth anyway. Whistling "Sweet Violets" shrilly, he made his way back into the bedroom, where he carefully dressed in a suit, white shirt, and tie. He'd seen too many beat-up men who let themselves go to pot. Living alone the way he did made it even more important for him to be as neat as he could.

What's more, he told himself insidiously, the boys might drop over.

Thinking that way made him angry at himself. It was pure deception, because the bunch wouldn't untangle themselves out of the red tape and de-briefings for another week. That kind of wishful thinking could drift him into living on hungry anticipations, and leave him crabbed and querulous when they failed to materialize on his unreal schedule.

He clumped into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator with a yank of his arm.

That was something else to watch out for. Compensation was all well and good, but refrigerators didn't need all that effort to be opened. If he got into the habit of applying excessive arm-strength to everything, the day might come when



he'd convince himself a man didn't need legs at all. That, too, was a trap. A man could get along without legs, just as a man could teach himself to paint pictures with his toes. But he'd paint better with finger dexterity.

The idea was to hang on to reality. It was the one crutch everybody used.

He started coffee boiling and went back out to the living room to switch on the TV.

That was another thing. He could have deliberately stopped and turned it on while on his way to the kitchen. But he'd never thought to save the steps before he'd crashed. More difficult? Of course it was more difficult now! But he needed the exercise.

Lift. Swing. Lock. Lean. Lift other leg. Swing, lock. Lean. Unlock other leg. Lift—

He cursed viciously at the perspiration going down his face.

And now the blasted set wouldn't switch on. The knob was loose. He looked more closely, leaning carefully to one side in order to get a look at the set's face.

He had no depth perception, of course, but there was something strange about the dark square behind the plastic shield over the face of the tube.

The tube was gone. He grunted incredulously, but, now that his eye was accustomed to the dimmer light in this room, he could see the inside of the cabinet through the shield.

He pushed the cabinet away from the wall with an unexpected ease that almost toppled him. The entire set was gone. The antenna line dangled loosely from the wall. Only the big speaker, mounted below the chassis compartment, was still there.

First, he checked the doors and windows.

The two doors were locked from the inside, and the house, being air-conditioned, had no openable windows. He had only to ascertain that none of the panes had been broken or removed. Then he catalogued his valuables and found nothing gone.



The check was not quite complete. The house had a cellar. But before he was willing to go through that effort, he weighed the only other possibility in balance.

His attitude on psychiatry was blunt, and on psychology only a little less so. But he was a pragmatist; that is, he played unintuitive poker with success.

Because he was a pragmatist, he first checked the possibility that he'd had a mental lapse and forgotten he'd called to have the set taken out for repairs. Unlocking the front door, he got the paper off the step. A glance at the date and a story lead beginning "Yesterday's return of the *Endeavor*—" exploded that hypothesis, not to his surprise. The set had been there last night. It was still too early today for any repair shop to be open.

Ergo, he had to check the cellar windows. He hadn't lost a day, or done anything else incredible like that. Tossing the paper on the kitchen table, he swung his way to the cellar door, opened it, and looked down, hoping against hope that he'd see the broken window from here and be able to report the burglary without the necessity of having to ease himself down the steps.

But, no such luck. Tucking the canes under his left arm, he grasped the railing and fought his body's drag.

Once down, he found it unnecessary to look at the windows. The set chassis was in the middle of his old, dust-covered workbench. It was on its side, and the wiring had been ripped out. The big tube turned its pale face toward him from a nest of other components. A soldering iron balanced on the edge of the bench, and some rewiring had been begun on the underside of the chassis.

It was only then—and this, he admitted to himself without any feeling of self-reproach, was perfectly normal for a man like himself—that he paid any notice to the superficial burns, few in number, on the thumb and forefinger of his left hand.

The essence of anything he might plan, he decided, was in discarding the possibility of immediate outside help.

He sat in his chair, drinking a cup of the coffee he'd made



after having to scrape the burnt remains of the first batch out of the coffee-maker, and could see where that made the best sense.

He had no burglary to report, so that took care of the police. As for calling anyone else, he didn't have the faintest idea of whom to call if he'd wanted to. There was no government agency, local, state, or federal—certainly not international, ramified though the United Nations was—offering advice and assistance to people who disassembled their own TV sets in their sleep and then proceeded to re-work them into something else.

Besides, this was one he'd solve for himself.

He chuckled. What problem wasn't? He was constitutionally incapable of accepting anyone else's opinion over his own, and he knew it.

Well, then, data thus far:

One ex-TV set in the cellar. Better: one collection of electronic parts.

Three burns on fingertips. Soldering iron?

He didn't know. He supposed that, if he ever took the trouble to bone up with a book or two on circuitry, he could throw together a fair FM receiver, and, given a false start or two, mock up some kind of jackleg video circuit. But he'd never used a soldering iron in his life. He imagined the first try might prove disgracefully clumsy.

Questions:

How did one shot-up bag of rag-doll bones and twitchless nerves named Harvey Cable accomplish all this in his sleep?

How did he pull that set out of the cabinet, hold it in both arms as he'd have to, and, even granting the chair up to this point, make it down the cellar steps?

Last question, par value, \$64.00: Where had the tools come from?

He searched the house again, but there was definitely no one else in it.

Toward noon he found his mind still uneasy on one point. He got out his rubber-stamp pad, inked his fingertips, and impressed a set of prints on a sheet of paper. With this, his



shaving brush, and a can of talcum powder, he made his way into the cellar again and dusted the face of the picture tube. The results were spotty, marred by the stiffness of the brush and his lack of skill, but after he hit on the idea of letting the powder drift across the glass like a dry ripple riding the impetus of his gently blown breath, he got a clear print of several of his fingers. There were some very faint prints that were not his own, but he judged from their apparent age that they must belong to the various assemblers in the tube's parent factory. There were no prints of comparable freshness to his own, and he knew he'd never handled the tube before.

That settled that.

Next, he examined the unfamiliar tools that had been laid on the bench. Some of them were arranged in neat order, but others—the small electric soldering iron, a pair of pliers, and several screwdrivers—were scattered among the parts. He dusted those, too, and found his own prints on them. All of the tools were new, and unmarked with work scratches.

He went over to where his electric drill was hanging up beside his other woodworking tools. There were a few shavings of aluminum clinging to the burr of the chuck. Going back to the reworked chassis, he saw that several new cuts and drillings had been made in it.

Well. He looked blankly at it all.

Next question: What in the name of holy horned hell am I building?

He sat looking thoughtfully down at the paper, which he'd finally come around to reading. He wasn't the only one infested with mysteries.

The story he'd glanced at before read:

## OFFICIAL CENSORSHIP SHROUDS ENDEAVOR CREW

*Albuquerque, May 14—Yesterday's return of the Endeavor brought with it a return of outmoded press policies on the part of all official government agencies concerned. In an un-*



*precedented move, both the U. S. and U. N. Press Secretaries late last night refused to permit further interviews with the crew or examination of the starship. At the same time, the Press was restricted to the use of official mimeographed releases in its stories.*

*Unofficial actions went even farther. Reporters at the Sandia auxiliary press facilities were told "off the record" that a "serious view" might "well be taken" if attempts were made to circumvent these regulations. This was taken to mean that offending newspapers would henceforth be cut off from all official releases. Inasmuch as these releases now constitute all the available information on the Endeavor, her crew, and their discoveries, this "unofficial advice" is tantamount to a threat of total censorship. The spokesman giving this "advice" declined to let his name be used.*

*Speculation is rife that some serious mishap, in the nature of an unsuspected disease or infection, may have been discovered among members of the Endeavor's crew. There can, of course, be no corroboration or denial of this rumor until the various agencies involved deign to give it.*

Under this was a box: *See Editorial, "A Free Press in a Free World," p. 23.*

Cable chuckled, momentarily, at the paper's discomfiture. But his face twisted into a scowl again while he wondered whether Dugan, Frawley, Snell, and Tommy Penn were all right. The odds were good that the disease theory was a bunch of journalistic hogwash, but anything that made the government act like that was sure to be serious.

Some of his annoyance, he realized with another chuckle on a slightly different note, came from his disappointment. It looked like it might be even longer before the bunch was free to come over and visit him.

But this return to yesterday's perverse selfishness did not stay with him long. He was looking forward eagerly to tonight's experiment. Cable smiled with a certain degree of animation as he turned the pages. By tomorrow he'd have a much better idea of what was happening here. Necessarily,



his own problem eclipsed the starship mystery. But that was good.

It was nice, having a problem to wrestle with again.

There was an item about a burgled hardware store—"small tools and electrical supplies were taken"—and he examined it coolly. Data on source of tools?

The possibility existed. Disregard the fact he was the world's worst raw burglar material. He hadn't been a set designer before last night, either.

He immediately discarded the recurring idea that the police should be called. They'd refuse to take him seriously; there was even a tangible risk of being cross-questioned by a psychiatrist.

He judged as objectively as he could that it would take several days of this before he grew unreasonably worried. Until such time, he was going to tackle this by himself, as best he could.

His gums still ached, he noticed—more so than this morning, perhaps.

His eyes opened, and he looked out at morning sunshine. So, he hadn't been able to keep awake all night. He'd hardly expected to.

Working methodically, he looked at the scratch pad on which he'd been noting the time at ten-minute intervals. The last entry, in a sloppy hand, was for eleven-twenty. Somewhat later than he was usually able to keep awake, but not significantly much.

He looked at his watch. It was now 7:50 a.m. A little more than eight hours, all told, and again he felt unusually rested. Well, fine. A sound mind in a sound body, and all that. The early worm gets the bird. Many lights make hand work easier on the eyes. A nightingale in the bush is worth two birds in the hand.

He was also pretty cheerful.

Strapping on his braces and picking up his canes, he now swung himself over to the locked bedroom door. There were no new burns on his fingers.



He looked at the door critically. It was still locked, and, presumably until proven otherwise, the key was still far out of reach in the hall, where he'd skittered it under the door after turning the lock.

He turned back to the corner where he'd left the screwdriver balanced precariously on a complex arrangement of pots and pans which the tool's weight kept from toppling, and which he'd had to hold together with string while he was assembling it. After placing the screwdriver, he'd burned the string, as well as every other piece of twine or sewing thread in the house.

He was unable to lift the tool now without sending the utensils tumbling with a crash and clatter that made him wince. It seemed only reasonable that the racket would have been quite capable of waking the half-dead, even if none of his other somnambulistic activities had. But the screwdriver hadn't been touched—or else his sleeping brain was more ingenious than his waking one.

Well, we'll see. He went back to the door, found no scratches on the lock, but left quite a few in the process of taking the lock apart and letting himself out.

Data: key still far out on hall floor. He picked it up after some maneuvering with his canes and brace locks, put it in his pocket, and went to the cellar door, which was also still locked.

His tactics here had been somewhat different. The key was on the kitchen table, on a dark tablecloth, with flour scattered over it in a random pattern he'd subsequently memorized with no hope of being able to duplicate it.

The flour was undisturbed. Nevertheless, there was a possibility he might have shaken out the cloth, turned it over to hide the traces of flour remaining, replaced the key, and somehow duplicated the flour pattern—or, at any rate, come close enough to fool himself, provided he was interested in fooling himself.

This checked out negative. He'd done no such thing. He defied anyone to get all the traces of flour out of the cloth without laundering it, in which case he'd been wonderfully



ingenious at counterfeiting several leftover food stains.

Ergo, he hadn't touched the key. *Ipsa facto. Reductio ad absurdum. Non lessi illegitimis te carborundum.*

Next move.

He unlocked the cellar door and lowered himself down the steps.

Which gave him much food for thought. He stood cursing softly at the sight of the chassis with more work done on it.

For the first time he felt a certain degree of apprehension. No bewilderment, as yet; too many practical examples in his lifetime had taught him that today's inexplicable mystery was tomorrow's dry fact. Nevertheless, he clumped forward with irritated impatience and stood looking down at the workbench.

All the tools were scattered about now. The tube had been wiped clean of his amateur fingerprintings yesterday, and the tools, apparently, had come clean in handling. The chassis was tipped up again, and some parts, one of which looked as though it had been revamped, had been bolted to its upper surface and wired into the growing circuit. The soldering was much cleaner; apparently he was learning.

He was also learning to walk through locked doors, damn it!

He'd left a note for himself: "What am I doing?" block-printed in heavy letters on a shirt cardboard he'd propped against the chassis. It had been moved to one side, laid down on the far end of the bench.

There was no answer.

He glowered down at the day's paper, his eye scanning the lines, but not reading. It wasn't even in focus.

His entire jaw was aching, but he grimly concentrated past that, grinding at the situation with the sharp teeth of his mind.

The new fingerprints on the set were his, again. He was still doing a solo—or was it a duet with himself?

He'd rechecked the locks, examined the doors, tried to move the immovable hinge pins, and even tested the bed-



room and cellar windows to make sure against the absurd possibility that he'd gotten them open and clambered in and out that way.

The answer was no.

But the thing in the cellar had more work done on it.

The answer was yes.

That led nowhere. Time out to let the subconscious mull it over. He concentrated on the paper, focusing his blurred vision on the newspaper by main force, wondering how the starship base was doing with *its* mystery.

Not very well. The entire base had been quarantined, and the official press releases cut to an obfuscatory trickle.

For a moment, his anxiety about the boys made him forget his preoccupation. Reading as rapidly as he could with his foggy eye, he discovered that the base was entirely off limits to anyone now; apparently that applied to government personnel, too. The base had been cordoned off by National Guard units at a distance of two miles. The paper was beating the disease drum for all it was worth, and reporting a great deal of international anxiety on the subject.

It seemed possible now that the paper was correct in its guess. At any rate, it carried a front-page story describing the sudden journeys of several top-flight biologists and biochemists en route to the base, or at least this general area.

Cable clamped his lips into a worried frown.

He'd been in on a number of the preliminary briefings on the trip, before he'd disqualified himself. The theory had been that alien bugs wouldn't be any happier on a human being than, say, a rock lichen would be. But even the people quoting the theory had admitted that the odds were not altogether prohibitive against it, and it was Cable's experience that theories were only good about twenty-five per cent of the time in the first place.

It was at this point that the idea of a correlation between the starship's mystery and his own first struck him.

He fumed over it for several hours.

The idea looked silly. Even at second or third glance, it resembled the kind of brainstorm a desperate man might get in a jam like this.



That knowledge alone was enough to prejudice him strongly against the possibility. But he couldn't quite persuade himself to let go of it.

Item: The crew of the starship might be down with something.

Item: The base was only twenty miles away. Air-borne infection?

Item: The disease, if it was a disease, had attacked the world's first astronauts. By virtue of his jouncings-about in the prototype models, he also qualified as such.

A selective disease attacking people by occupational specialty?

Bushwah!

Air-borne infection in an air-conditioned house?

All right, his jaw ached and his vision was blurred.

He pawed angrily at his eye.

When he had conceived of interfering with the progress of the work, he'd intended it as one more cool check on what the response would be. But now it had become something of a personal spite against whatever it was he was doing in the cellar.

By ten o'clock that night, he'd worked himself into a fuming state of temper. He clumped downstairs, stood glaring at the set, and was unable to deduce anything new from it. Finally he followed the second part of his experimental program by ripping all the re-done wiring loose, adding a scrawled "Answer me!" under yesterday's note, and went to bed seething. Let's see what he did about *that*.

His mouth ached like fury in the morning, overbalancing his sense of general well-being. He distracted himself with the thought that he was getting a lot of sound rest, for a man on a twenty-four day, while he lurched quickly into the bathroom and peeled his lips back in front of the mirror.

He stared at the front of his mouth in complete amazement. Then he began to laugh, clutching the washbasin and continuing to look incredulously at the sight in the mirror.

He was teething!



With the look of a middle-aged man discovering himself with chicken pox, he put his thumb and forefinger up to his gums and felt the hard ridges of outthrusting enamel.

He calmed down with difficulty, unable to resist the occasional fresh temptation to run his tongue over the sprouting teeth. Third sets of teeth occasionally happened, he knew, but he'd dismissed that possibility quite early in the game. Now, despite his self-assurances at the time the bridge was fitted, he could admit that manufactured dentures were never as satisfying as the ones a man grew for himself. He grinned down at the pronged monstrosity he'd been fitting into his mouth each morning for the past year, picked it up delicately, and dropped it into the wastebasket with a satisfying sound.

Whistling again for the first time in two days, he went out to the cellar door and opened it, bent, and peered down. He grunted and reached for the rail as he swung his right foot forward.

He opened his mouth in a strangled noise of surprise. He'd seen *depth* down those stairs. His other eye was working again—the retina had re-attached itself!

The stairs tumbled down with a crash as their supports, sawed through, collapsed under his weight. The railing came limply loose in his clutch, and he smashed down into the welter of splintered boards ten feet below.

I shouldn't, he thought to himself in one flicker of consciousness, have ripped up that set. Then he pitched into blackness again.

He rolled over groggily, wiped his hand over his face, and opened his eyes. There didn't seem to be any pain.

He was facing the stairs, which had been restored. The braces had been splinted with scrap lumber, and two of the treads were new wood. The old ones were stacked in a corner, and he half-growled at the sight of brown smears on their splintered ends.

There was still no pain. He had no idea of how long he'd been lying here on the cellar floor. His watch was smashed.

He looked over at the workbench, and saw that whatever



he'd been building was finished. The chassis sat right side up on the bench, the power cord trailing up to the socket.

It looked like no piece of equipment he'd ever seen. The tube was lying on the bench beside the chassis, wired in but unmounted. Apparently it didn't matter whether it was rigidly positioned or not. He saw two control knobs rising directly out of the top of the chassis, as well as two or three holes in the chassis where components had been in the TV circuit but were not required for this new use. The smaller tubes glowed. The set was turned on.

Apparently, too, he hadn't cared what condition his body was in while he worked on it.

He'd been fighting to keep his attention away from his body. The teeth and the eye had given him a hint he didn't dare confirm at first.

But it was true. He could feel the grittiness of the floor against the skin of his thighs and calves. His toes responded when he tried to move them, and his legs flexed.

His vision was perfect, and his teeth were full-grown, strong and hard as he clamped them to keep his breathing from frightening him.

Something brushed against his leg, and he looked down. His leg motions had snapped a hair-thin copper wire looped around one ankle and leading off toward the bench. He looked up, and the triggered picture tube blinked a light in his eyes.

*Blink can't think blink rhythm I think blink trick think blink sink blink wink—CAN'T THINK!*

He slammed his hands up against his face, covering his eyes.

He held them there for a few choked moments. Then he opened two fingers in a thin slit, like a little boy playing peek-a-boo with his mother.

The light struck his eye again. This time there was no getting away. The trigger of the picture tube's flicker chipped at each attempt to think, interrupting each beat of his brain as it tried to bring its attention on anything but the stimulus of that blink. He had no chance of even telling his hands to cover his eyes again.



His body collapsed like a marionette, and his face dropped below the flickering beam. His head hanging, he got to his hands and knees like a young boy getting up to face the schoolyard bully again.

The blink reflected off the floor and snapped his head up like a kick. The beam struck him full in the eyes.

It was even impossible for him to tell his throat to scream. He swayed on his knees, and the blink went into his brain like a sewing machine.

Eventually he fell again, and by now he was beginning to realize what the machine was doing to him. Like an Air Force cadet feeling the controls of his first trainer, he began to realize that there was a logic to this—that certain actions produced a certain response—that the machine could predict the rhythm of his thoughts and throttle each one as it tried to leave his brain and translate itself into coherent thought.

He looked up deliberately, planning to snatch his face to one side the moment he felt it grip him again.

This time he was dimly aware of his arms, flailing upward and trying to find his face in a hopelessly unco-ordinated effort.

He discovered he could sidestep the blink. If he upset the machine's mechanical prediction, he could think. His mind rolled its thought processes along well-worn grooves. As simple a thought as knowing he was afraid had to search out its correlations in a welter of skin temperature data, respiration and heartbeat notations, and an army of remembered precedents.

If he could reshuffle that procedure, using data first that would ordinarily claim his attention last, he could think. The blink couldn't stop him.

Like a man flying cross-country for the first time, he learned that railroads and highways are snakes, not arrows. Like a pilot teaching his instincts to push the nose *down* in a stall, abrogating the falling-response that made him ache to pull back on the stick, he learned. He had to, or crash.

To do that, he had to change the way he thought.

The blink turned into a flashing light that winked on and off at pre-set intervals. He reached up and decided which



knob was logically the master switch. He turned it off, feeling the muscles move, his skin stretch, and his bones roll to the motion. He felt the delicate nerves in his fingertips tell him how much pressure was on his capillaries, and the nerves under his fingernails corroborate their reading against the pressure there. His fingers told him when the switch was off, not the click of it. There was no click. The man who'd put that switch in hadn't intended it for human use.

Most of all, he felt his silent brother smile within him.

The three uniformed men stopped in the doorway and stared at him.

"Harvey Cable?" one of them finally asked. He blinked his eyes in the bright sunshine, peering through the doorway.

Cable smiled. "That's right. Come on in."

The man who'd spoken wore an Air Force major's insignia and uniform. The other two were United Nations inspectors. They stepped in gingerly, looking around them curiously.

"I refurnished the place," Cable said pleasantly. "I've got a pretty good assortment of wood-working tools in the cellar."

The major was pale, and the inspectors were nervous. They exchanged glances. "Typical case," one of them muttered, as though it had to be put in words.

"We understood you were crippled," the major stated.

"I was, Major—?"

"Paulson. Inspector Lee, and Inspector Carveth." Paulson took a deep breath. "Well, we're exposed, now. May we sit down?"

"Sure. Help yourselves. Exposed to the disease, you mean?"

The major dropped bitterly into a chair, an expression of surprise flickering over his face as he realized how comfortable it was. "Whatever it is. Contagious psychosis, they're saying now. No cure," he added bluntly.

"No disease," Cable said, but made little impression. All three men had their mouths clamped in thin, desperate lines. Apparently the most superficial contact with the "disease"



had proved sufficient for "infection."

"Well," Cable said, "what can I do for you? Would you like a drink first?"

Paulson shook his head, and the inspectors followed suit. Cable shrugged politely.

"We came here to do a job," Paulson said doggedly. "We might as well do it." He took an envelope out of his blouse pocket. "We had quite a battle with the Postmaster General about this. But we got it. It's a letter to you from Thomas Penn."

Cable took it with a wordless tilt of one eyebrow. It had been opened. Reaching into the envelope, he pulled out a short note:

*Harv—*

*Chances are, this is the only way we'll have time to get in touch with you. Even so, you may not get it. Don't worry about us, no matter what you hear. We're fine. You won't know how fine until you get acquainted with the friend we're sending you.*

*Good luck,  
Tommy*

He smiled, feeling his silent brother smile, too. For a moment they shared the warmth of feeling between them. Then he turned his attention back to the three men. "Yes?"

Paulson glared at him. "Well, what about it? What friend? Where is he?"

Cable grinned at him. Paulson would never believe him if he told him. So there was no good in telling him. He'd have to find out for himself.

Just as everybody would. There was no logic in telling. Telling proved nothing, and who would welcome a "parasitic" alien into his body and mind, even if that "parasite" was a gentle, intelligent being who kept watch over the host, repairing his health, seeing to his well-being? Even if that "parasite" gave you sanity and rest, tranquillity and peace, because he needed it in order to fully be your brother? Who wants symbiosis until he's felt it? Not you, Major. Not



Harvey Cable, either, fighting his battles on the edge of the world, proud, able—but alone.

Who wants to know any human being can go where he wants to, do what he wants to, now? Who wants to know disease is finished, age is calm, and death is always a falling asleep, now? Not the medical quacks, not the lonely hearts bureaus, not the burial insurance companies. Not the people who live on fear. Who wants a brother who doesn't hesitate to slap you down if you need it while you're growing up?

Should the *Endeavor* have brought riot and war back with it? Better a little panic now, damping itself out before it even gets out of the Southwest.

No, you don't tell people about this. You simply give it.

"Well?" Paulson demanded again.

Cable smiled at him. "Relax, Major. There's all the time in the world. My friend's where you can't ever get him unless I let you. What's going on up around the base?"

Paulson grunted his anger. "I don't know," he said harshly. "We were all in the outer quarantine circle."

"The outer circle. It's getting to one circle after another, is it?"

"Yes!"

"What's it like? The disease. What does it do?"

"You know better than I do."

"Men walking in their sleep? Doing things? Getting past guards and sentries, getting out of locked rooms? Some of them building funny kinds of electronic rigs?"

"What do you think?" Paulson was picturing himself doing it. It was plain on his face.

"I think so. Frighten you?"

Paulson didn't answer.

"It shouldn't. It's a little rough, going it alone, but with others around you, I don't imagine you'll have any trouble."

It wasn't the man who momentarily disorganized his body and passed under a door who was frightened. Not after he could do it of his own volition instead of unconsciously, at his brother's direction. It was the man who watched him do it, just as it was the men on the ground who were terrified for the Wright brothers. Paulson was remembering what



he'd seen. He had no idea of how it felt to be free.

Cable thought of the stars he'd seen glimmering as he rode *Endeavor's* prototype, and the curtains and clouds of galaxies beyond them. He'd wanted to go to them all, and stand on every one of their planets.

Well, he couldn't quite have that. There wasn't time enough in a man's life. But his brother, too, had been a member of a race chained to one planet. The two of them could see quite a bit before they grew too old.

So we were born in a Solar System with one habitable planet, and we developed the star drive. And on Alpha's planet, a race hung on, waiting for someone to come along and give it hands and bodies.

What price the final plan of the universe? Will my brother and I find the next piece of the ultimate jigsaw puzzle?

Cable looked at the three men, grinning at the thought of the first time one of them discovered a missing tooth was growing back in.

Starting with Paulson, he sent them each a part of his brother.



# STRANGER STATION

by Damon Knight

In the evolution of science-fantasy through thirty years of existence as popular magazine fiction, one of the most noticeable changes has been in the treatment and characterization of e-t's (extraterrestrials). At one time, all "aliens" were either implacable enemies of mankind, bent on invading and destroying Earth, or subjugated slave-"natives" of a Glorious Earth Empire.

This year, the theme of contact between Terrestrials and Others was a favorite one, but the old-fashioned bug-eyed monster was hardly to be found in print, although the species still appears to be extant in Hollywood.

Mr. Knight's e-t is the exception—a traditional monster-type, horrifically described herein with that gleeful attention to unpleasant detail for which Knight (as writer and critic) is deservedly well-known.

THE CLANG OF METAL echoed hollowly down through the Station's many vaulted corridors and rooms. Paul Wesson stood listening for a moment as the rolling echoes died away. The maintenance rocket was gone, heading back to Home; they had left him alone in Stranger Station.

Stranger Station! The name itself quickened his imagination. Wesson knew that both orbital stations had been named a century ago by the then British administration of the satellite service: "Home" because the larger, inner station handled the traffic of Earth and its colonies; "Stranger" because the outer station was designed specifically for dealings with foreigners . . . beings from outside the solar system. But even that could not diminish the wonder of Stranger Sta-



tion, whirling out here alone in the dark—waiting for its once-in-two-decades visitor. . . .

One man, out of all Sol's billions, had the task and privilege of enduring the alien's presence when it came. The two races, according to Wesson's understanding of the subject, were so fundamentally different that it was painful for them to meet. Well, he had volunteered for the job, and he thought he could handle it—the rewards were big enough.

He had gone through all the tests, and against his own expectations he had been chosen. The maintenance crew had brought him up as dead weight, drugged in a survival hamper; they had kept him the same way while they did their work, and then had brought him back to consciousness. Now they were gone. He was alone.

. . . But not quite.

"Welcome to Stranger Station, Sergeant Wesson," said a pleasant voice. "This is your alpha network speaking. I'm here to protect and serve you in every way. If there's anything you want, just ask me."

Wesson had been warned, but he was still shocked at the human quality of it. The alpha networks were the last word in robot brains—computers, safety devices, personal servants, libraries, all wrapped up in one, with something so close to "personality" and "free will" that experts were still arguing the question. They were rare and fantastically expensive; Wesson had never met one before.

"Thanks," he said now, to the empty air. "Uh—what do I call you, by the way? I can't keep saying, 'Hey, alpha network.' "

"One of your recent predecessors called me Aunt Nettie."

Wesson grimaced. Alpha network—Aunt Nettie. He hated puns; that wouldn't do. "The Aunt part is all right," he said. "Suppose I call you Aunt Jane. That was my mother's sister; you sound like her, a little bit."

"I am honored," said the invisible mechanism politely. "Can I serve you any refreshments now? Sandwiches? A drink?"

"Not just yet," said Wesson.

He turned away. That seemed to end the conversation as



far as the network was concerned. A good thing; it was all right to have it for company, speaking when spoken to, but if it got talkative . . .

The human part of the Station was in four segments: bedroom, living room, dining room, bath. The living room was comfortably large and pleasantly furnished in greens and tans: the only mechanical note in it was the big instrument console in one corner. The other rooms, arranged in a ring around the living room, were tiny: just space enough for Wesson, a narrow encircling corridor, and the mechanisms that would serve him. The whole place was spotlessly clean, gleaming and efficient in spite of its twenty-year layoff.

*This is the gravy part of the run*, Wesson told himself. The month before the alien came—good food, no work, and an alpha network for conversation. “Aunt Jane, I’ll have a small steak now,” he said to the network. “Medium rare, with hash-brown potatoes, onions and mushrooms, and a glass of lager. Call me when it’s ready.”

“Right,” said the voice pleasantly. Out in the dining room, the autochef began to hum and cluck self-importantly. Wesson wandered over and inspected the instrument console. Airlocks were sealed and tight, said the dials; the air was cycling. The Station was in orbit, and rotating on its axis with a force at the perimeter, where Wesson was, of one g. The internal temperature of this part of the Station was an even 73°.

The other side of the board told a different story; all the dials were dark and dead. Sector Two, occupying a volume some eighty-eight thousand times as great as this one, was not yet functioning.

Wesson had a vivid mental image of the Station, from photographs and diagrams—a 500-foot duralumin sphere, onto which the shallow 30-foot disk of the human section had been stuck apparently as an afterthought. The whole cavity of the sphere, very nearly—except for a honeycomb of supply and maintenance rooms, and the all-important, recently enlarged vats—was one cramped chamber for the alien. . . .

The steak was good, bubbling crisp outside the way he



liked it, tender and pink inside. "Aunt Jane," he said with his mouth full, "this is pretty soft, isn't it?"

"The steak?" asked the voice, with a faintly anxious note.

Wesson grinned. "Never mind," he said. "Listen, Aunt Jane, you've been through this routine . . . how many times? Were you installed with the Station, or what?"

"I was not installed with the Station," said Aunt Jane primly. "I have assisted at three contacts."

"Um. Cigarette," said Wesson, slapping his pockets. The autochef hummed for a moment, and popped a pack of G.I.'s out of a vent. Wesson lit up. "All right," he said, "you've been through this three times. There are a lot of things you can tell me, right?"

"Oh, yes, certainly. What would you like to know?"

Wesson smoked, leaning back reflectively, green eyes narrowed. "First," he said, "read me the Pigeon report—you know, from the *Brief History*. I want to see if I remember it right."

"Chapter Two," said the voice promptly. "First contact with a non-Solar intelligence was made by Commander Ralph C. Pigeon on July 1, 1987, during an emergency landing on Titan. The following is an excerpt from his official report:

*"While searching for a possible cause for our mental disturbance, we discovered what appeared to be a gigantic construction of metal on the far side of the ridge. Our distress grew stronger with the approach to this construction, which was polyhedral and approximately five times the length of the Cologne.*

*"Some of those present expressed a wish to retire, but Lt. Acuff and myself had a strong sense of being called or summoned in some indefinable way. Although our uneasiness was not lessened, we therefore agreed to go forward and keep radio contact with the rest of the party while they returned to the ship.*

*"We gained access to the alien construction by way of a large, irregular opening . . . The internal temperature was minus seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit; the atmosphere ap-*



*peared to consist of methane and ammonia . . . Inside the second chamber, an alien creature was waiting for us. We felt the distress which I have tried to describe, to a much greater degree than before, and also the sense of summoning or pleading . . . We observed that the creature was exuding a thick yellowish fluid from certain joints or pores in its surface. Though disgusted, I managed to collect a sample of this exudate, and it was later forwarded for analysis . . .*

"The second contact was made ten years later by Commodore Crawford's famous Titan Expedition—"

"No, that's enough," said Wesson. "I just wanted the Pigeon quote." He smoked, brooding. "It seems kind of chopped off, doesn't it? Have you got a longer version in your memory banks anywhere?"

There was a pause. "No," said Aunt Jane.

"There was more to it when I was a kid," Wesson complained nervously. "I read that book when I was twelve, and I remember a long description of the alien . . . that is, I remember its being there." He swung around. "Listen, Aunt Jane—you're a sort of universal watchdog, that right? You've got cameras and mikes all over the Station?"

"Yes," said the network, sounding—was it Wesson's imagination?—faintly injured.

"Well, what about Sector Two—you must have cameras up there, too, isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"All right, then you can tell me. What do the aliens look like?"

There was a definite pause. "I'm sorry, I can't tell you that," said Aunt Jane.

"No," said Wesson, "I didn't think you could. You've got orders not to, I guess, for the same reason those history books have been cut since I was a kid. Now, what would the reason be? Have you got any idea, Aunt Jane?"

There was another pause. "Yes," the voice admitted.

"Well?"

"I'm sorry, I can't—"

"—tell you that," Wesson repeated along with it. "All



right. At least we know where we stand.”

“Yes, sergeant. Would you like some dessert?”

“No dessert. One other thing. *What happens to Station watchmen, like me, after their tour of duty?*”

“They are upgraded to Class Seven, students with unlimited leisure, and receive outright gifts of seven thousand stellors, plus free Class One housing—”

“Yeah, I know all that,” said Wesson, licking his dry lips. “But here’s what I’m asking you. The ones you knew—what kind of shape were they in when they left here?”

“The usual human shape,” said the voice brightly. “Why do you ask, sergeant?”

Wesson made a discontented gesture. “Something I remember from a bull session at the Academy. I can’t get it out of my head; I know it had something to do with the Station. Just a part of a sentence—‘*blind as a bat, and white bristles all over.*’ Now, would that be a description of the alien . . . or the watchman when they came to take him away?”

Aunt Jane went into one of her heavy pauses. “All right, I’ll save you the trouble,” said Wesson. “You’re sorry, you can’t tell me that.”

“I *am* sorry,” said the robot, sincerely.

Aunt Jane was a model companion. She had a record library of thousands of hours of music; she had films to show him, and micro-printed books that he could read on the scanner in the living room; or if he preferred, she would read to him. She controlled the Station’s three telescopes, and on request would give him a view of Earth, or the Moon, or Home. . . .

But there was no news. Aunt Jane would obligingly turn on the radio receiver if he asked her, but nothing except static came out. That was the thing that weighed most heavily on Wesson, as time passed: the knowledge that radio silence was being imposed on all ships in transit, on the orbital stations, and on the planet-to-space transmitters. It was an enormous, almost a crippling handicap. Some information could be transmitted over relatively short distances by



photophone, but ordinarily the whole complex traffic of the spacelanes depended on radio.

But this coming alien contact was so delicate a thing that even a radio voice, out here where the Earth was only a tiny disk twice the size of the Moon, might upset it. It was so precarious a thing, Wesson thought, that only one man could be allowed in the Station while the alien was there, and to give that man the company that would keep him sane, they had to install an alpha network. . . .

"Aunt Jane?"

The voice answered promptly, "Yes, Paul."

"This distress that the books talk about—you wouldn't know what it is, would you?"

"No, Paul."

"Because robot brains don't feel it, right?"

"Right, Paul."

"So tell me this—why do they need a man here at all? Why can't they get along with just you?"

A pause. "I don't know, Paul." The voice sounded faintly wistful.

He got up from the living-room couch and paced restlessly back and forth. "Let's have a look at Earth," he said. Obediently, the viewing screen on the console glowed into life: there was the blue Earth, swimming deep below him, in its first quarter, jewel-bright. "Switch it off," Wesson said.

"A little music?" suggested the voice, and immediately began to play something soothing, full of woodwinds.

"No," said Wesson. The music stopped.

Wesson's hands were trembling; he had a caged and frustrated feeling.

The fitted suit was in its locker beside the air lock. Wesson had been topside in it once or twice; there was nothing to see up there, just darkness and cold. But he had to get out of this squirrel-cage. He took the suit down.

"Paul," said Aunt Jane anxiously, "are you feeling nervous?"

"Yes," he snarled.

"Then don't go into Sector Two," said Aunt Jane.

"Don't tell me what to do, you hunk of tin!" said Wesson



with sudden anger. He zipped up the front of his suit.

Aunt Jane was silent.

The air lock, an upright tube barely large enough for one man, was the only passage between Sector One and Sector Two. It was also the only exit from Sector One; to get here in the first place, Wesson had had to enter the big lock at the "south" pole of the sphere, and travel all the way down inside by drop-hole and catwalk. He had been drugged unconscious at the time, of course. When the time came, he would go out the same way; neither the maintenance rocket nor the tanker had any space, or time, to spare.

At the "north" pole opposite, there was a third air lock, this one so huge it could easily have held an interplanet freighter. But that was nobody's business—no human being's.

In the beam of Wesson's helmet lamp, the enormous central cavity of the Station was an inky gulf that sent back only remote, mocking glimmers of light. The near walls sparkled with hoar-frost. Sector Two was not yet pressurized; there was only a diffuse vapor that had leaked through the airseal, and had long since frozen into the powdery deposit that lined the walls. The metal rang cold under his shod feet; the vast emptiness of the chamber was the more depressing because it was airless, unwarmed and unlit. *Alone*, said his footsteps; *alone* . . .

He was thirty yards up the catwalk when his anxiety suddenly grew stronger. Wesson stopped in spite of himself, and turned clumsily, putting his back to the wall. The support of the solid wall was not enough. The catwalk seemed threatening to tilt underfoot, dropping him into the gulf.

Wesson recognized this drained feeling, this metallic taste at the back of his tongue. It was fear.

The thought ticked through his head, *They want me to be afraid*. But why? Why now? Of what?

Equally suddenly, he knew. The nameless pressure tightened, like a great fist closing, and Wesson had the appalling sense of something so huge that it had no limits at all, descending, with a terrible endless swift slowness. . . .

His first month was up.



The alien was coming.

As Wesson turned, gasping, the whole huge structure of the Station around him seemed to dwindle to the size of an ordinary room . . . and Wesson with it, so that he seemed to himself like a tiny insect, frantically scuttling down the walls toward safety.

Behind him as he ran, the Station *boomed*.

In the silent rooms, all the lights were burning dimly. Wesson lay still, looking at the ceiling. Up there, his imagination formed a shifting, changing image of the alien—huge, shadowy, formlessly menacing.

Sweat had gathered in globules on his brow. He stared, unable to look away.

"That was why you didn't want me to go topside, huh, Aunt Jane?"

"Yes. The nervousness is the first sign. But you gave me a direct order, Paul."

"I know it," he said vaguely, still staring fixedly at the ceiling. "A funny thing . . . Aunt Jane?"

"Yes, Paul."

"You won't tell me what it looks like, right?"

"No, Paul."

"I don't want to know. Lord, I don't *want* to know . . . Funny thing, Aunt Jane, part of me is just pure funk—I'm so scared, I'm nothing but a jelly—"

"I know," said the voice gently.

"—and part is real cool and calm, as if it didn't matter. Crazy, the things you think about. You know?"

"What things, Paul?"

He tried to laugh. "I'm remembering a kids' party I went to twenty . . . twenty-five years ago. I was, let's see, I was nine. I remember, because that was the same year my father died.

"We were living in Dallas then, in a rented mobilehouse, and there was a family in the next tract with a bunch of red-headed kids. They were always throwing parties; nobody liked them much, but everybody always went."

"Tell me about the party, Paul."



He shifted on the couch. "This one, this one was a Hallowe'en party. I remember the girls had on black and orange dresses, and the boys mostly wore spirit costumes. I was about the youngest kid there, and I felt kind of out of place. Then all of a sudden one of the redheads jumps up in a skull mask, hollering, 'C'mon, everybody get ready for hidenseek.' And he grabs *me*, and says, '*You* be it,' and before I can even move, he shoves me into a dark closet. And I hear that door lock behind me."

He moistened his lips. "And then—you know, in the darkness—I feel something hit my *face*. You know, cold and clammy, like, I don't know, something dead. . . .

"I just hunched up on the floor of that closet, waiting for that thing to touch me again. You know? That thing, cold and kind of gritty, hanging up there. You know what it was? A cloth glove, full of ice and bran cereal. A joke. Boy, that was one joke I never forgot. . . . Aunt Jane?"

"Yes, Paul."

"Hey, I'll bet you alpha networks make great psychs, huh? I could lie here and tell you anything, because you're just a machine—right?"

"Right, Paul," said the network sorrowfully.

"Aunt Jane, Aunt Jane . . . It's no use kidding myself along. I can *feel* that thing up there, just a couple of yards away."

"I know you can, Paul."

"I can't stand it, Aunt Jane."

"You can if you think you can, Paul."

He writhed on the couch. "It's—it's dirty, it's clammy. My God, is it going to be like that for *five months*? I can't, it'll kill me, Aunt Jane."

There was another thunderous boom, echoing down through the structural members of the Station. "What's that?" Wesson gasped. "The other ship—casting off?"

"Yes. Now he's alone, just as you are."

"Not like me. He can't be feeling what I'm feeling. Aunt Jane, you don't know . . ."

Up there, separated from him only by a few yards of metal, the alien's enormous, monstrous body hung. It was



that poised weight, as real as if he could touch it, that weighed down his chest.

Wesson had been a space-dweller for most of his adult life, and knew even in his bones that if an orbital station ever collapsed, the "under" part would not be crushed but would be hurled away by its own angular momentum. This was not the oppressiveness of planetside buildings, where the looming mass above you seemed always threatening to fall: this was something else, completely distinct, and impossible to argue away.

It was the scent of danger, hanging unseen up there in the dark, waiting, cold and heavy. It was the recurrent nightmare of Wesson's childhood—the bloated unreal shape, no-color, no-size, that kept on hideously falling toward his face. . . . It was the dead puppy he had pulled out of the creek, that summer in Dakota . . . wet fur, limp head, cold, cold, *cold*. . . .

With an effort, Wesson rolled over on the couch and lifted himself to one elbow. The pressure was an insistent chill weight on his skull; the room seemed to dip and swing around in slow circles.

Wesson felt his jaw muscles contorting with the strain as he knelt, then stood erect. His back and legs tightened; his mouth hung painfully open. He took one step, then another, timing them to hit the floor as it came upright.

The right side of the console, the one that had been dark, was lighted. Pressure in Sector Two, according to the indicator, was about one and a third atmospheres. The air lock indicator showed a slightly higher pressure of oxygen and argon; that was to keep any of the alien atmosphere from contaminating Sector One, but it also meant that the lock would no longer open from either side.

"Lemme see Earth," he gasped.

The screen lighted up as he stared into it. "It's a long way down," he said. A long, long way down to the bottom of that well. . . . He had spent ten featureless years as a servo tech in Home Station. Before that, he'd wanted to be a pilot, but had washed out the first years—couldn't take the math. But he had never once thought of going back to Earth.



"Aunt Jane, Aunt Jane, it's beautiful," he mumbled.

Down there, he knew, it was spring; and in certain places, where the edge of darkness retreated, it was morning: a watery blue morning like the sea light caught in an agate, a morning with smoke and mist in it; a morning of stillness and promise. Down there, lost years and miles away, some tiny dot of a woman was opening her microscopic door to listen to an atom's song. Lost, lost, and packed away in cotton wool, like a specimen slide: one spring morning on Earth.

Black miles above, so far that sixty Earths could have been piled one on another to make a pole for his perch, Wesson swung in his endless circle within a circle. Yet, vast as was the gulf beneath him, all this—Earth, Moon, orbital stations, ships; yes, the Sun and all the rest of his planets, too—was the merest sniff of space, to be pinched up between thumb and finger.

Beyond—there was the true gulf. In that deep night, galaxies lay sprawled aglitter, piercing a distance that could only be named in a meaningless number, a cry of dismay: O,O,O. . . .

Crawling and fighting, blasting with energies too big for them, men had come as far as Uranus. But if a man had been tall enough to lie with his boots toasting in the Sun and his head freezing at Pluto, still he would have been too small for that overwhelming emptiness. Here, not at Pluto, was the outermost limit of man's empire: here the Outside funneled down to meet it, like the pinched waist of an hourglass: here, and only here, the two worlds came near enough to touch. Ours—and Theirs.

Down at the bottom of the board, now, the golden dials were faintly alight, the needles trembling ever so little on their pins.

Deep in the vats, the vats, the golden liquid was trickling down: *"Though disgusted, I took a sample of the exudate and it was forwarded for analysis. . . ."*

Space-cold fluid, trickling down the bitter walls of the tubes, forming little pools in the cups of darkness; goldenly agleam there, half-alive. The golden elixir. One drop of the



concentrate would arrest aging for twenty years—keep your arteries soft, tonus good, eyes clear, hair pigmented, brain alert.

That was what the tests of Pigeon's sample had showed. That was the reason for the whole crazy history of the "alien trading post"—first a hut on Titan, then later, when people understood more about the problem, Stranger Station.

Once every twenty years, an alien would come down out of Somewhere, and sit in the tiny cage we had made for him, and make us rich beyond our dreams—rich with life . . . and still we did not know why.

Above him, Wesson imagined he could see that sensed body a-wallow in the glacial blackness, its bulk passively turning with the Station's spin, bleeding a chill gold into the lips of the tubes: drip, drop.

Wesson held his head. The pressure inside made it hard to think; it felt as if his skull were about to fly apart. "Aunt Jane," he said.

"Yes, Paul." The kindly, comforting voice: like a nurse. The nurse who stands beside your cot while you have painful, necessary things done to you.

"Aunt Jane," said Wesson, "do you know why they keep coming back?"

"No," said the voice precisely. "It is a mystery."

Wesson nodded. "I had," he said, "an interview with Gower before I left Home. You know Gower? Chief of the Outworld Bureau. Came up especially to see me."

"Yes?" said Aunt Jane encouragingly.

"Said to me, 'Wesson, you got to find out. Find out if we can count on them to keep up the supply. You know? There's fifty million more of us,' he says, 'than when you were born. We need more of the stuff, and we got to know if we can count on it. Because,' he says, 'you know what would happen if it stopped?' Do you know, Aunt Jane?"

"It would be," said the voice, "a catastrophe."

"That's right," Wesson said respectfully. "It would. Like, he says to me, 'What if the people in the Nefud area were cut off from the Jordan Valley Authority? Why, there'd be millions dying of thirst in a week.'



“ ‘Or what if the freighters stopped coming to Moon Base. Why,’ he says, ‘there’d be thousands starving and smothering.’ ”

“He says, ‘Where the water is, where you can get food and air, people are going to settle, and get married, you know? and have kids.’ ”

“He says, ‘If the so-called longevity serum stopped coming . . .’ Says, ‘Every twentieth adult in the Sol family is due for his shot this year.’ Says, ‘Of those, almost twenty per cent are one hundred fifteen or older.’ Says, ‘The deaths in that group, in the first year, would be at least three times what the actuarial tables call for.’ ” Wesson raised a strained face. “I’m thirty-four, you know?” he said. “That Gower, he made me feel like a baby.”

Aunt Jane made a sympathetic noise.

“Drip, drip,” said Wesson hysterically. The needles of the tall golden indicators were infinitesimally higher. “Every twenty years, we need more of the stuff, so somebody like me has to come out and take it for five lousy months. And one of *them* has to come out and sit there, and *drip*. *Why*, Aunt Jane? What for? Why should it matter to them whether we live a long time or not? Why do they keep on coming back? What do they take *away* from here?”

But to these questions, Aunt Jane had no reply.

All day and every day, the lights burned cold and steady in the circular gray corridor around the rim of Sector One. The hard gray flooring had been deeply scuffed in that circular path before Wesson ever walked there: the corridor existed for that only, like a treadmill in a squirrel cage; it said “Walk,” and Wesson walked. A man would go crazy if he sat still, with that squirming, indescribable pressure on his head; and so Wesson paced off the miles, all day and every day, until he dropped like a dead man in the bed at night.

He talked, too, sometimes to himself, sometimes to the listening alpha network; sometimes it was difficult to tell which. “Moss on a rock,” he muttered, pacing. “Told him, wouldn’t give twenty mills for any damn shell. . . . Little peb-



bles down there, all colors." He shuffled on in silence for a while. Abruptly: "I don't see *why* they couldn't have given me a cat."

Aunt Jane said nothing. After a moment Wesson went on, "Nearly everybody at Home has a cat, for God's sake, or a goldfish or something. You're all right, Aunt Jane, but I can't *see* you. My God, I mean if they couldn't send a man a woman for company, what I mean, my God, I never liked *cats*." He swung around the doorway into the bedroom, and absent-mindedly slammed his fist into the bloody place on the wall.

"But a cat would have been *something*," he said.

Aunt Jane was still silent.

"Don't pretend your damn feelings are hurt, I know you, you're only a damn machine," said Wesson. "Listen, Aunt Jane, I remember a cereal package one time that had a horse and a cowboy on the side. There wasn't much room, so about all you saw was their faces. It used to strike me funny how much they looked alike. Two ears on the top with hair in the middle. Two eyes. Nose. Mouth with teeth in it. I was thinking, we're kind of distant cousins, aren't we, us and the horses. But compared to that thing up there—we're *brothers*. You know?"

"Yes," said Aunt Jane, quietly.

"So I keep asking myself, why couldn't they have sent a horse, or a cat, *instead* of a man? But I guess the answer is, because only a man could take what I'm taking. God, only a man. Right?"

"Right," said Aunt Jane, with deep sorrow.

Wesson stopped at the bedroom doorway again and shuddered, holding onto the frame. "Aunt Jane," he said in a low, clear voice, "you take pictures of *him* up there, don't you?"

"Yes, Paul."

"And you take pictures of me. And then what happens? After it's all over, who looks at the pictures?"

"I don't know," said Aunt Jane humbly.

"You don't know. But whoever looks at 'em, it doesn't do any good. Right? We got to find out why, why, why . . . And



we never do find out, do we?"

"No," said Aunt Jane.

"But don't they figure that if the man who's going through it could see him, he might be able to tell something? That other people couldn't? Doesn't that make sense?"

"That's out of my hands, Paul."

He sniggered. "That's funny. Oh, that's funny." He chortled in his throat, reeling around the circuit.

"Yes, that's funny," said Aunt Jane.

"Aunt Jane, tell me what happens to the watchmen."

". . . I can't tell you that, Paul."

He lurched into the living room, sat down before the console, beat on its smooth, cold metal with his fists. "What are you, some kind of monster? Isn't there any blood in your veins, damn it, or oil or *anything*?"

"Please, Paul—"

"Don't you see, all I want to know, can they talk? Can they tell anything after their tour is over?"

". . . No, Paul."

He stood upright, clutching the console for balance. "They can't? No, I figured. And you know why?"

"No."

"Up there," said Wesson obscurely. "Moss on the rock."

"Paul, what?"

"We get changed," said Wesson, stumbling out of the room again. "We get changed. Like a piece of iron next to a magnet. Can't help it. You—nonmagnetic, I guess. Goes right through you, huh, Aunt Jane? You don't get changed. You stay here, wait for the next one."

"Yes," said Aunt Jane.

"You know," said Wesson, pacing, "I can tell how he's lying up there. Head *that* way, tail the other. Am I right?"

". . . Yes," said Aunt Jane.

Wesson stopped. "Yes," he said intently. "So you *can* tell me what you see up there, can't you, Aunt Jane?"

"No. Yes. It isn't allowed."

"Listen, Aunt Jane, *we'll die* unless we can find out what makes those aliens tick! Remember that." Wesson leaned against the corridor wall, gazing up. "He's turning now—"



around this way. Right?"

"Right."

"Well, what else is he doing? Come on, Aunt Janel!"

A pause. "He is twitching his . . ."

"What?"

"I don't know the words."

"My God, my God," said Wesson, clutching his head, "of course there aren't any words." He ran into the living room, clutched the console and stared at the blank screen. He pounded the metal with his fist. "You've got to show me, Aunt Jane, come on and show me, show me!"

"It isn't allowed," Aunt Jane protested.

"You've got to do it just the same, or we'll *die*, Aunt Jane—millions of us, billions, and it'll be your fault, get it, *your fault*, Aunt Jane!"

"*Please*," said the voice. There was a pause. The screen flickered to life, for an instant only. Wesson had a glimpse of something massive and dark, but half transparent, like a magnified insect—a tangle of nameless limbs, whiplike filaments, claws, wings . . .

He clutched the edge of the console.

"Was that all right?" Aunt Jane asked.

"Of course! What do you think, it'll kill me to look at it? Put it back, Aunt Jane, put it back!"

Reluctantly, the screen lighted again. Wesson stared, and went on staring. He mumbled something.

"What?" said Aunt Jane.

"*Life of my love, I loathe thee*," said Wesson, staring. He roused himself after a moment and turned away. The image of the alien stayed with him as he went reeling into the corridor again; he was not surprised to find that it reminded him of all the loathsome, crawling, creeping things the Earth was full of. That explained why he was not supposed to see the alien, or even know what it looked like—because that fed his hate. And it was all right for him to be afraid of the alien, but he was not supposed to hate it . . . why not? Why not?

His fingers were shaking. He felt drained, steamed, dried up and withered. The one daily shower Aunt Jane allowed



him was no longer enough. Twenty minutes after bathing, the acid sweat dripped again from his armpits, the cold sweat was beaded on his forehead, the hot sweat was in his palms. Wesson felt as if there were a furnace inside him, out of control, all the dampers drawn. He knew that under stress, something of the kind did happen to a man: the body's chemistry was altered—more adrenalin, more glycogen in the muscles; eyes brighter, digestion retarded. That was the trouble—he was burning himself up, unable to fight the thing that tormented him, or to run from it.

After another circuit, Wesson's steps faltered. He hesitated, and went into the living room. He leaned over the console, staring. From the screen, the alien stared blindly up into space. Down in the dark side, the golden indicators had climbed: the vats were more than two-thirds filled.

. . . to *fight*, or *run* . . .

Slowly Wesson sank down in front of the console. He sat hunched, head bent, hands squeezed tight between his knees, trying to hold onto the thought that had come to him.

If the alien felt a pain as great as Wesson's—or greater—Stress might alter the alien's body chemistry, too.

*Life of my love, I loathe thee.*

Wesson pushed the irrelevant thought aside. He stared at the screen, trying to envisage the alien, up there, wincing in pain and distress—sweating a golden sweat of horror. . . .

After a long time, he stood up and walked into the kitchen. He caught the table edge to keep his legs from carrying him on around the circuit. He sat down.

Humming fondly, the autochef slid out a tray of small glasses—water, orange juice, milk. Wesson put the water glass to his stiff lips; the water was cool, and hurt his throat. Then the juice, but he could drink only a little of it; then he sipped the milk. Aunt Jane hummed approvingly.

Dehydrated—how long had it been since he had eaten, or drunk? He looked at his hands. They were thin bundles of sticks, ropy-veined, with hard yellow claws. He could see the bones of his forearms under the skin, and his heart's beating stirred the cloth at his chest. The pale hairs on his arms and thighs—were they blond, or white?



The blurred reflections in the metal trim of the dining room gave him no answers—only pale faceless smears of gray. Wesson felt light-headed and very weak, as if he had just ended a bout of fever. He fumbled over his ribs and shoulder-bones. He was thin.

He sat in front of the autochef for a few minutes more, but no food came out. Evidently Aunt Jane did not think he was ready for it, and perhaps she was right. *Worse for them than for us*, he thought dizzily. *That's why the Station's so far out; why radio silence, and only one man aboard. They couldn't stand it at all, otherwise. . . .* Suddenly he could think of nothing but sleep—the bottomless pit, layer after layer of smothering velvet, numbing and soft. . . . His leg muscles quivered and twitched when he tried to walk, but he managed to get to the bedroom and fall on the mattress. The resilient block seemed to dissolve under him. His bones were melting.

He woke with a clear head, very weak, thinking cold and clear: *When two alien cultures meet, the stronger must transform the weaker with love or hate.* “Wesson’s Law,” he said aloud. He looked automatically for pencil and paper, but there was none, and he realized he would have to tell Aunt Jane, and let her remember it.

“I don’t understand,” she said.

“Never mind, remember it anyway. You’re good at that, aren’t you?”

“Yes, Paul.”

“All right. . . . I want some breakfast.”

He thought about Aunt Jane, so nearly human, sitting up here in her metal prison, leading one man after another through the torments of hell . . . nursemaid, protector, torturer. They must have known that something would have to give. . . . But the alphas were comparatively new; nobody understood them very well. Perhaps they really thought that an absolute prohibition could never be broken.

*. . . the stronger must transform the weaker . . .*

*I’m the stronger*, he thought. *And that’s the way it’s going to be.* He stopped at the console, and the screen was



blank. He said angrily, "Aunt Jane!" And with a guilty start, the screen flickered into life.

Up there, the alien had rolled again in his pain. Now the great clustered eyes were staring directly into the camera; the coiled limbs threshed in pain: the eyes were staring, asking, pleading . . .

"No," said Wesson, feeling his own pain like an iron cap, and he slammed his hand down on the manual control. The screen went dark. He looked up, sweating, and saw the floral picture over the console.

The thick stems were like antennae, the leaves thoraxes, the buds like blind insect-eyes. The whole picture moved slightly, endlessly, in a slow waiting rhythm.

Wesson clutched the hard metal of the console and stared at the picture, with sweat cold on his brow, until it turned into a calm, meaningless arrangement of lines again. Then he went into the dining room, shaking, and sat down.

After a moment he said, "Aunt Jane, does it get worse?"

"No. From now on, it gets better."

"How long?" he asked vaguely.

"One month."

A month, getting "better" . . . that was the way it had always been, with the watchman swamped and drowned, his personality submerged. Wesson thought about the men who had gone before him—Class Seven citizenship, with unlimited leisure, and Class One housing, yes, sure . . . in a sanatorium.

His lips peeled back from his teeth, and his fists clenched hard. *Not me!* he thought.

He spread his hands on the cool metal to steady them. He said, "How much longer do they usually stay able to talk?"

"You are already talking longer than any of them." . . .

Then there was a blank. Wesson was vaguely aware, in snatches, of the corridor walls moving past, and the console glimpsed, and of a thunderous cloud of ideas that swirled around his head in a beating of wings. The aliens: what did they want? And what happened to the watchmen in Stranger Station?



The haze receded a little, and he was in the dining room again, staring vacantly at the table. Something was wrong.

He ate a few spoonfuls of the gruel the autochef served him, then pushed it away; the stuff tasted faintly unpleasant. The machine hummed anxiously and thrust a poached egg at him, but Wesson got up from the table.

The Station was all but silent. The resting rhythm of the household machines throbbed in the walls, unheard. The blue-lit living room was spread out before him like an empty stage-setting, and Wesson stared as if he had never seen it before.

He lurched to the console and stared down at the pictured alien on the screen: heavy, heavy, asprawl with pain in the darkness. The needles of the golden indicators were high, the enlarged vats almost full. *It's too much for him*, Wesson thought with grim satisfaction. The peace that followed the pain had not descended as it was supposed to; no, not this time!

He glanced up at the painting over the console: heavy crustacean limbs that swayed gracefully.

He shook his head violently. *I won't let it; I won't give in!* He held the back of one hand close to his eyes. He saw the dozens of tiny cuneiform wrinkles stamped into the skin over the knuckles, the pale hairs sprouting, the pink shiny flesh of recent scars. *I'm human*, he thought. But when he let his hand fall onto the console, the bony fingers seemed to crouch like crustaceans' legs, ready to scuttle.

Sweating, Wesson stared into the screen. Pictured there, the alien met his eyes, and it was as if they spoke to each other, mind to mind, an instantaneous communication that needed no words. There was a piercing sweetness in it, a melting, dissolving luxury of change into something that would no longer have any pain. . . . A pull, a calling.

Wesson straightened up slowly, carefully, as if he held some fragile thing in his mind that must not be handled roughly, or it would disintegrate. He said hoarsely, "Aunt Jane!"

She made some responsive noise.

He said, "Aunt Jane, I've got the answer! The whole



thing! Listen, now, wait—listen!” He paused a moment to collect his thoughts. “*When two alien cultures meet, the stronger must transform the weaker with love or hate. Remember? You said you didn’t understand what that meant. I’ll tell you what it means. When these—monsters—met Pigeon a hundred years ago on Titan, they knew we’d have to meet again. They’re spreading out, colonizing, and so are we. We haven’t got interstellar flight yet, but give us another hundred years, we’ll get it. We’ll wind up out there, where they are. And they can’t stop us. Because they’re not killers, Aunt Jane, it isn’t in them. They’re nicer than us. See, they’re like the missionaries, and we’re the South Sea Islanders. They don’t kill their enemies, oh no—perish the thought!*”

She was trying to say something, to interrupt him, but he rushed on. “Listen! The longevity serum—that was a lucky accident. But they played it for all it’s worth. Slick and smooth—they come and give us the stuff free—they don’t ask for a thing in return. Why not? Listen.

“They come here, and the shock of that first contact makes them sweat out that golden gook we need. Then, the last month or so, the pain always eases off. Why? Because the two minds, the human and alien, they stop fighting each other. Something gives way, it goes soft and there’s a mixing together. And that’s where you get the human casualties of this operation—the bleary men that come out of here not even able to talk human language any more. Oh, I suppose they’re happy—happier than I am!—because they’ve got something big and wonderful inside ’em. Something that you and I can’t even understand. But if you took them and put them together again with the aliens who spent time here, *they could all live together—they’re adapted.*

“That’s what they’re aiming for!” He struck the console with his fist. “Not now—but a hundred, two hundred years from now! When we start expanding out to the stars—when we go a-conquering—we’ll have already been conquered! Not by weapons, Aunt Jane, not by hate—by love! Yes, love! *Dirty, stinking, low-down, sneaking love!*”

Aunt Jane said something, a long sentence, in a high, anxious voice.



"What?" said Wesson irritably. He couldn't understand a word.

Aunt Jane was silent. "What, what?" Wesson demanded, pounding the console. "Have you got it through your tin head, or not? *What?*"

Aunt Jane said something else, tonelessly. Once more, Wesson could not make out a single word.

He stood frozen. Warm tears started suddenly out of his eyes. "Aunt Jane—" he said. He remembered, *You are already talking longer than any of them.* Too late? Too late? He tensed, then whirled and sprang to the closet where the paper books were kept. He opened the first one his hand struck.

The black letters were alien squiggles on the page, little humped shapes, without meaning.

The tears were coming faster, he couldn't stop them: tears of weariness, tears of frustration, tears of hate. "*Aunt Jane!*" he roared.

But it was no good. The curtain of silence had come down over his head. He was one of the vanguard—the conquered men, the ones who would get along with their stranger brothers, out among the alien stars.

The console was not working any more; nothing worked when he wanted it. Wesson squatted in the shower stall, naked, with a soup bowl in his hands. Water droplets glistened on his hands and forearms; the pale short hairs were just springing up, drying.

The silvery skin of reflection in the bowl gave him back nothing but a silhouette, a shadow man's outline. He could not see his face.

He dropped the bowl and went across the living room, shuffling the pale drifts of paper underfoot. The black lines on the paper, when his eyes happened to light on them, were worm-shapes, crawling things, conveying nothing. He rolled slightly in his walk; his eyes were glazed. His head twitched, every now and then, sketching a useless motion to avoid pain.

Once the bureau chief, Gower, came to stand in his way. "You fool," he said, his face contorted in anger, "you were



supposed to go on to the end, like the rest. Now look what you've done!"

"I found out, didn't I?" Wesson mumbled, and as he brushed the man aside like a cobweb, the pain suddenly grew more intense. Wesson clasped his head in his hands with a grunt, and rocked to and fro a moment, uselessly, before he straightened and went on. The pain was coming in waves now, so tall that at their peak his vision dimmed out, violet, then gray.

It couldn't go on much longer. Something had to burst.

He paused at the bloody place and slapped the metal with his palm, making the sound ring dully up into the frame of the Station: *rroom, rroom*.

Faintly an echo came back: *boooooom*.

Wesson kept going, smiling a faint and meaningless smile. He was only marking time now, waiting. Something was about to happen.

The dining-room doorway sprouted a sudden sill and tripped him. He fell heavily, sliding on the floor, and lay without moving beneath the slick gleam of the autochef.

The pressure was too great: the autochef's clucking was swallowed up in the ringing pressure, and the tall gray walls buckled slowly in. . . .

The Station lurched.

Wesson felt it through his chest, palms, knees and elbows: the floor was plucked away for an instant and then swung back.

The pain in his skull relaxed its grip a little. Wesson tried to get to his feet.

There was an electric silence in the Station. On the second try, he got up and leaned his back against a wall. *Cluck*, said the autochef suddenly, hysterically, and the vent popped open, but nothing came out.

He listened, straining to hear. What?

The Station bounced beneath him, making his feet jump like a puppet's; the wall slapped his back hard, shuddered and was still; but far off through the metal cage came a long angry groan of metal, echoing, diminishing, dying. Then silence again.



The Station held its breath. All the myriad clickings and pulses in the walls were suspended; in the empty rooms the lights burned with a yellow glare, and the air hung stagnant and still. The console lights in the living room glowed like witchfires. Water in the dropped bowl, at the bottom of the shower stall, shone like quicksilver, waiting.

The third shock came. Wesson found himself on his hands and knees, the jolt still tingling in the bones of his body, staring at the floor. The sound that filled the room ebbed away slowly and ran down into the silences: a resonant metallic hollow sound, shuddering away now along the girders and hull plates, rattling tinnily into bolts and fittings, diminishing, noiseless, gone. The silence pressed down again.

The floor leaped painfully under his body: one great resonant blow that shook him from head to foot.

A muted echo of that blow came a few seconds later, as if the shock had traveled across the Station and back.

*The bed*, Wesson thought, and scrambled on hands and knees through the doorway, along a floor curiously tilted, until he reached the rubbery block.

The room burst visibly upward around him, squeezing the block flat. It dropped back as violently, leaving Wesson bouncing helpless on the mattress, his limbs flying. It came to rest, in a long reluctant groan of metal.

Wesson rolled up on one elbow, thinking incoherently, *Air, the air lock*. Another blow slammed him down into the mattress, pinched his lungs shut, while the room danced grotesquely over his head. Gasping for breath in the ringing silence, Wesson felt a slow icy chill rolling toward him across the room . . . and there was a pungent smell in the air. *Ammonia!* he thought; and the odorless, smothering methane with it.

His cell was breached. The burst membrane was fatal: the alien's atmosphere would kill him.

Wesson surged to his feet. The next shock caught him off balance, dashed him to the floor. He arose again, dazed and limping; he was still thinking confusedly, *The air lock, get out*.

When he was halfway to the door, all the ceiling lights



went out at once. The darkness was like a blanket around his head. It was bitter cold now in the room, and the pungent smell was sharper. Coughing, Wesson hurried forward. The floor lurched under his feet.

Only the golden indicators burned now: full to the top, the deep vats brimming, golden-lipped, gravid, a month before the time. Wesson shuddered.

Water spurted in the bathroom, hissing steadily on the tiles, rattling in the plastic bowl at the bottom of the shower stall. The lights winked on and off again. In the dining room, he heard the autochef clucking and sighing. The freezing wind blew harder: he was numb with cold to the hips. It seemed to Wesson abruptly that he was not at the top of the sky at all, but down, *down* at the bottom of the sea . . . trapped in this steel bubble, while the dark poured in.

The pain in his head was gone, as if it had never been there, and he understood what that meant: Up there, the great body was hanging like butcher's carrion in the darkness. Its death struggles were over, the damage done.

Wesson gathered a desperate breath, shouted, "Help me! The alien's dead! He kicked the Station apart—the methane's coming in! Get help, do you hear me? *Do you hear me?*"

Silence. In the smothering blackness, he remembered: *She can't understand me any more. Even if she's alive.*

He turned, making an animal noise in his throat. He groped his way on around the room, past the second doorway. Behind the walls, something was dripping with a slow cold tinkle and splash, a forlorn night sound. Small, hard floating things rapped against his legs. Then he touched a smooth curve of metal: the air lock.

Eagerly he pushed his feeble weight against the door. It didn't move. And it didn't move. Cold air was rushing out around the door frame, a thin knife-cold stream, but the door itself was jammed tight.

The suit! He should have thought of that before. If he just had some pure air to breathe, and a little warmth in his fingers . . . But the door of the suit locker would not move, either. The ceiling must have buckled.



And that was the end, he thought, bewildered. There were no more ways out. But there *had* to be— He pounded on the door until his arms would not lift any more; it did not move. Leaning against the chill metal, he saw a single light blink on overhead.

The room was a wild place of black shadows and swimming shapes—the book leaves, fluttering and darting in the air stream. Schools of them beat wildly at the walls, curling over, baffled, trying again; others were swooping around the outer corridor, around and around: he could see them whirling past the doorways, dreamlike, a white drift of silent paper in the darkness.

The acrid smell was harsher in his nostrils. Wesson choked, groping his way to the console again. He pounded it with his open hand: he wanted to see Earth.

But when the little square of brightness leaped up, it was the dead body of the alien that Wesson saw.

It hung motionless in the cavity of the Station, limbs dangling stiff and still, eyes dull. The last turn of the screw had been too much for it: but Wesson had survived . . .

For a few minutes.

The dead alien face mocked him; a whisper of memory floated into his mind: *We might have been brothers. . . .* All at once, Wesson passionately wanted to believe it—wanted to give in, turn back. That passed. Wearily he let himself sag into the bitter *now*, thinking with thin defiance, *It's done—hate wins. You'll have to stop this big giveaway—can't risk this happening again. And we'll hate you for that—and when we get out to the stars—*

The world was swimming numbly away out of reach. He felt the last fit of coughing take his body, as if it were happening to someone else beside him.

The last fluttering leaves of paper came to rest. There was a long silence in the drowned room.

Then:

“Paul,” said the voice of the mechanical woman brokenly; “Paul,” it said again, with the hopelessness of lost, unknown, impossible love.



## EACH AN EXPLORER

by Isaac Asimov

Dr. Asimov is an expert on non-human life, as well as on non-living intelligence. As the author of "I, Robot," he is probably the world's foremost (fictional) authority on the positronic brain and "robopsychology," and is the originator of the "three basic laws of robotics" (which have by now become the axiomatic property of all science-fiction writers). As a biochemist working in cancer research, he is in daily contact with life-forms both microscopic and monstrous.

Here he develops the reverse of Mr. Knight's theme. The most disgusting slobs of e-t's may be gentlemen under their scaly skins, warns the learned doctor, but the friendliest and most innocuous li'l fellas may also be dangerous.

HERMAN CHOUNS was a man of hunches. Sometimes he was right; sometimes he was wrong—about fifty-fifty. Still, considering that one has the whole universe of possibilities from which to pull a right answer, fifty-fifty begins to look pretty good.

Chouns wasn't always as pleased with the matter as might be expected. It put too much of a strain on him. People would huddle around a problem, making nothing of it, then turn to him and say, "What do you think, Chouns? Turn on the old intuition."

And if he came up with something that fizzled, the responsibility for that was made clearly his.

His job, as Field Explorer, rather made things worse.

"Think that planet's worth a closer look?" they would say. "What do you think, Chouns?"

So it was a relief to draw a two-man spot for a change



(meaning that the next trip would be to some low-priority spot, and the pressure would be off) and on top of it, to get Allen Smith as partner.

Smith was as matter-of-fact as his name. He said to Chouns the first day out, "The thing about you is that the memory files in your brain are on extra-special call. Faced with a problem, you remember enough little things that maybe the rest of us don't come up with to make a decision. Calling it a hunch just makes it mysterious, and it isn't."

He rubbed his hair slickly back as he said that. He had light hair that lay down like a skull-cap.

Chouns, whose hair was very unruly, and whose nose was snub and a bit off-center, said softly (as was his way), "I think maybe it's telepathy."

"What!"

"Just a trace of it."

"Nuts!" said Smith, with loud derision (as was *his* way). "Scientists have been tracking psionics for a thousand years and gotten nowhere. There's no such thing: no precognition; no telkinesis; no clairvoyance; *and* no telepathy."

"I admit that, but consider this. If I get a picture of what each of a group of people are thinking—even though I might not be aware of what was happening—I could integrate the information and come up with an answer. I would know more than any single individual in the group, so I could make a better judgment than the others—sometimes."

"Do you have any evidence at all for that?"

Chouns turned his mild brown eyes on the other. "Just a hunch."

They got along well. Chouns welcomed the other's refreshing practicality, and Smith patronized the other's speculations. They often disagreed but never quarreled.

Even when they reached their objective, which was a globular cluster that had never felt the energy thrusts of a human-designed nuclear reactor before, increasing tension did not worsen matters.

Smith said, "Wonder what they do with all this data back on Earth. Seems a waste sometimes."

Chouns said, "Earth is just beginning to spread out. No



telling how far humanity will move out into the Galaxy, given a million years or so. All the data we can get on any world will come in handy some day."

"You sound like a recruiting manual for the Exploration Teams. Think there'll be anything interesting in that thing?" He indicated the visi-plate on which the no-longer distant cluster was centered like spilled talcum powder.

"Maybe. I've got a hunch—" Chouns stopped, gulped, blinked once or twice, and then smiled weakly.

Smith snorted. "Let's get a fix on the nearest stargroups and make a random pass through the thickest of it. One gets you ten, we find a McKomin ratio under 0.2."

"You'll lose," murmured Chouns. He felt the quick stir of excitement that always came when new worlds were about to be spread beneath them. It was a most contagious feeling, and it caught hundreds of youngsters each year. Youngsters, such as he had been once, flocked to the Teams, eager to see the worlds their descendants some day would call their own, each an explorer—

They got their fix, made their first close-quarters hyperspatial jump into the cluster, and began scanning stars for planetary systems. The computers did their work; the information files grew steadily, and all proceeded in satisfactory routine—until at system 23, shortly after completion of the jump, the ship's hyperatomic motors failed.

Chouns muttered, "Funny. The analyzers don't say what's wrong."

He was right. The needles wavered erratically, never stopping once for a reasonable length of time, so that no diagnosis was indicated. And, as a consequence, no repairs could be carried through.

"Never saw anything like it," growled Smith. "We'll have to shut everything off and diagnose manually."

"We might as well do it comfortably," said Chouns, who was already at the telescopes. "Nothing's wrong with the ordinary space-drive, and there are two decent planets in this system."

"Oh? How decent and which ones?"

"The first and second out of four: Both water-oxygen.



The first is a bit warmer and larger than Earth; the second a bit colder and smaller. Fair enough?"

"Life?"

"Both. Vegetation, anyway."

Smith grunted. There was nothing in that to surprise anyone; vegetation occurred more often than not on water-oxygen worlds. And unlike animal life, vegetation could be seen telescopically—or, more precisely, spectroscopically. Only four photochemical pigments had ever been found in any plant form, and each could be detected by the nature of the light it reflected.

Chouns said, "Vegetation on both planets is chlorophyll-type, no less. It'll be just like Earth; real homey."

Smith said, "Which is closer?"

"Number two, and we're on our way. I have a feeling it's going to be a nice planet."

"I'll judge that by the instruments, *if* you don't mind," said Smith.

But this seemed to be one of Chouns's correct hunches. The planet was a tame one with an intricate ocean network that insured a climate of small temperature range. The mountain ranges were low and rounded, and the distribution of vegetation indicated high and widespread fertility.

Chouns was at the controls for the actual landing.

Smith grew impatient. "What are you picking and choosing for? One place is like another."

"I'm looking for a bare spot," said Chouns. "No use burning up an acre of plant life."

"What if you do?"

"What if I don't?" said Chouns, and found his bare spot.

It was only then, after landing, that they realized a small part of what they had tumbled into.

"Jumping space-warps," said Smith.

Chouns felt stunned. Animal life was much rarer than vegetation, and even the glimmerings of intelligence were far rarer still; yet here, not half a mile away from landing point, was a clustering of low, thatched huts that were obviously the product of a primitive intelligence.

"Careful," said Smith, dazedly.



"I don't think there's any harm," said Chouns. He stepped out onto the surface of the planet with firm confidence; Smith followed.

Chouns controlled his excitement with difficulty. "This is terrific. No one's ever reported anything better than caves or woven tree-branches before."

"I hope they're harmless."

"It's too peaceful for them to be anything else. Smell the air."

Coming down to landing, the terrain—to all points of horizon, except where a low range of hills broke the even line—had been colored a soothing pale pink, dappled against the chlorophyll-green. At closer quarters the pale pink broke up into individual flowers, fragile and fragrant. Only the areas in the immediate neighborhood of the huts were amber with something that looked like a cereal grain.

Creatures were emerging from the huts, moving closer to the ship with a kind of hesitating trust. They had four legs and a sloping body which stood three feet high at the shoulders. Their heads were set firmly on those shoulders, with bulging eyes (Chouns counted six) set in a circle and capable of the most disconcertingly independent motion. (*That makes up for the immovability of the head, thought Chouns.*)

Each animal had a tail that forked at the end, forming two sturdy fibrils that each animal held high. The fibrils maintained a rapid tremor that gave them a hazy, blurred look.

"Come on," said Chouns. "They won't hurt us; I'm sure of it."

The animals surrounded the men at a cautious distance. Their tails made a modulated humming noise.

"They might communicate that way," said Chouns. "And I think it's obvious they're vegetarians." He pointed toward one of the huts, where a small member of the species sat on its haunches, plucking at the amber grain with his tails, and flicking an ear of it through his mouth like a man sucking a series of maraschino cherries off a toothpick.

"Human beings eat lettuce," said Smith, "but that doesn't prove anything."

More of the tailed creatures emerged, hovered about the



men for a moment, then vanished off into the pink and green.

"Vegetarians," said Chouns firmly. "Look at the way they cultivate the main crop."

The main crop, as Chouns called it, consisted of a coronet of soft green spikes, close to the ground. Out of the center of the coronet grew a hairy stem which, at two-inch intervals, shot out fleshy veined buds that almost pulsated, they seemed so vitally alive. The stem ended at the tip with the pale pink blossoms that, except for the color, was the most Earthly thing about the plants.

The plants were laid out in rows and files with geometric precision. The soil about each was well-loosened and powdered with a foreign substance that could be nothing but fertilizer. Narrow passageways, just wide enough for an animal to pass along, criss-crossed the field and each passageway was lined with narrow sluiceways, obviously for water.

The animals were spread through the fields now, working diligently, heads bent. Only a few remained in the neighborhood of the two men.

Chouns nodded. "They're good farmers."

"Not bad," agreed Smith. He walked briskly toward the nearest of the pale pink blooms and reached for one; but six inches short of it he was stopped by the sound of tail-vibrations keening to shrillness, and by the actual touch of a tail upon his arm. The touch was delicate but firm, interposing itself between Smith and the plants.

Smith fell back, "What in Space—"

He had half reached for his blaster when Chouns said, "No cause for excitement; take it easy."

Half a dozen of the creatures were now gathering about the two, offering stalks of grain humbly and gently, some using their tails, some nudging it forward with their muzzles.

Chouns said, "They're friendly enough. Picking a bloom might be against their customs; the plants probably have to be treated according to rigid rules. Any culture that has agriculture probably has fertility rites, and Lord knows what that involves. The rules governing the cultivation of the plants must be strict, or there wouldn't be those accurate



measured rows. . . . Space, won't they sit up back home when they hear this?"

The tail-humming shot up in pitch again, and the creatures near them fell back. Another member of the species was emerging from a larger hut in the center of the group.

"The chief, I suppose," muttered Chouns.

The new one advanced slowly, tail high, each fibril encircling a small black object. At a distance of five feet, its tail arched forward.

"He's giving it to us," said Smith, in astonishment, "and Chouns, for God's sake, *look* at it."

Chouns was doing so, feverishly. He choked out, "They're Gamow hyperspatial sighters. Those are ten-thousand-dollar instruments."

Smith emerged from the ship again, after an hour within. He shouted from the ramp in high excitement. "They work. They're perfect. We're rich."

Chouns called back. "I've been checking through their huts. I can't find any more."

"Don't sneeze at just two. Good Lord, these are as negotiable as a handful of cash."

But Chouns still looked about, arms akimbo, exasperated. Three of the tailed creatures had dogged him from hut to hut—patiently, never interfering, but remaining always between him and the geometrically cultivated pale-pink blossoms. Now they stared multiply at him.

Smith said, "It's the latest model, too. Look here." He pointed to the raised lettering which said *Model X-20, Gamow Products, Warsaw, European Sector*.

Chouns glanced at it and said impatiently, "What interests me is getting more. I *know* there are more Gamow sighters somewhere, and I want them." His cheeks were flushed and his breathing heavy.

The sun was setting; the temperature dropped below the comfortable point. Smith sneezed twice, then Chouns.

"We'll catch pneumonia," snuffled Smith.

"I've got to make them understand," said Chouns stubbornly. He had eaten hastily through a can of pork sausage,



had gulped down a can of coffee, and was ready to try again.

He held the sighter high. "More," he said, "more," making encircling movements with his arms. He pointed to one sighter, then to the other, then to the imaginary additional ones lined up before him. "More."

Then, as the last of the sun dipped below the horizon, a vast hum arose from all parts of the field as every creature in sight ducked its head, lifted its forked tail, and vibrated it into screaming invisibility in the twilight.

"What in Space," muttered Smith uneasily. "Hey, look at the blooms!" He sneezed again.

The pale pink flowers were shriveling visibly.

Chouns shouted to make himself heard above the hum. "It may be a reaction to sunset. You know, the blooms close at night. The noise may be a religious observance of the fact."

A soft flick of a tail across his wrist attracted Chouns's instant attention. The tail he had felt belonged to the nearest creature; and now it was raised to the sky, toward a bright object low on the western horizon. The tail bent downward to point to the sighter, then up again to the star.

Chouns said excitedly, "Of course—the inner planet; the other habitable one. These must have come from there." Then, reminded by the thought, he cried in sudden shock, "Hey, Smith, the hyperatomic motors are still out."

Smith looked shocked, as though he had forgotten, too; then he mumbled, "Meant to tell you— They're all right."

"You fixed them?"

"Never touched them. But when I was testing the sighters, I used the hyperatomics and they worked. I didn't pay any attention at the time; I forgot there was anything wrong. Anyway, they worked."

"Then let's go," said Chouns at once. The thought of sleep never occurred to him.

Neither one slept through the six-hour trip. They remained at the controls in an almost drug-fed passion. Once again they chose a bare spot on which to land.

It was hot with an afternoon sub-tropical heat; and a



broad, muddy river moved placidly by them. The near bank was of hardened mud, riddled with large cavities.

The two men stepped out onto planetary surface and Smith cried hoarsely, "Chouns, look at that!"

Chouns shook off the other's grasping hand. He said, "The same plants! I'll be damned."

There was no mistaking the pale pink blossoms, the stalk with its veined buds, and the coronet of spikes below. Again there was the geometric spacing, the careful planting and fertilization, the irrigation canals.

Smith said, "We haven't made a mistake and circled—"

"Oh, look at the sun; it's twice the diameter it was before. And look there."

Out of the nearest burrows in the river bank, smoothly tan and sinuous objects, as limbless as snakes, emerged. They were a foot in diameter, ten feet in length. The two ends were equally featureless, equally blunt. Midway along their upper portions were bulges. All the bulges, as though on signal, grew before their eyes to fat ovals, split in two to form lipless, gaping mouths that opened and closed with a sound like a forest of dry sticks clapping together.

Then, just as on the outer planet, once their curiosities were satisfied and their fears calmed, most of the creatures drifted away toward the carefully cultivated field of plants.

Smith sneezed. The force of expelled breath against the sleeve of his jacket raised a powdering of dust.

He stared at that with amazement, then slapped himself and said, "Damn it, I'm dusty." The dust rose, like a pale pink fog. "You, too," he added, slapping Chouns.

Both men sneezed with abandon.

"Picked it up on the other planet, I suppose," said Chouns.

"We can work up an allergy."

"Impossible." Chouns held up one of the sighters and shouted at the snake things, "Do you have any of these?"

For a while there was nothing in answer but the splashing of water, as some of the snake things slid into the river and emerged with silvery clusters of water-life, which they tucked beneath their bodies toward some hidden mouth.

But then one snake-thing, longer than the others, came



thrusting along the ground, one blunt end raised questingly some two inches, weaving blindly side to side. The bulb in its center swelled gently at first, then alarmingly, splitting in two with an audible pop. There, nestling within the two halves were two more sighters, the duplicates of the first two.

Chouns said ecstatically, "Lord in Heaven, isn't that beautiful?"

He stepped hastily forward, reaching out for the objects. The swelling that held them thinned and lengthened, forming what were almost tentacles. They reached out toward him.

Chouns was laughing. They were Gamow sighters all right; duplicates, absolute duplicates, of the first two. Chouns fondled them.

Smith was shouting, "Don't you hear me? Chouns, damn it, listen to me."

Chouns said, "What?" He was dimly aware that Smith had been yelling at him for over a minute.

"Look at the flowers, Chouns."

They were closing, as had those on the other planet, and among the rows, the snake-things roared upward, balancing on one end and swaying with a queer, broken rhythm. Only the blunt ends of them were visible above the pale pink.

Smith said, "You can't say they're closing up because of nightfall. It's broad day."

Chouns shrugged. "Different planet, different plant. Come on! We've only got two sighters here; there must be more."

"Chouns, let's go home." Smith firmed his legs into two stubborn pillars and the grip he held on Chouns's collar tightened.

Chouns's reddened face turned back toward him indignantly. "What are you doing?"

"I'm getting ready to knock you out if you don't come back with me at once, into the ship."

For a moment, Chouns stood irresolute; then a certain wildness about him faded, a certain slackening took place, and he said, "All right."

They were half out the star cluster. Smith said, "How are you?"



Chouns sat up in his bunk and rumbled his hair. "Normal, I guess; sane again. How long have I been sleeping?"

"Twelve hours."

"What about you?"

"I've catnapped." Smith turned ostentatiously to the instruments and made some minor adjustments. He said self-consciously, "Do you know what happened back there on those planets?"

Chouns said slowly, "Do you?"

"I think so."

"Oh? May I hear?"

Smith said, "It was the same plant on both planets. You'll grant that?"

"I most certainly do."

"It was transplanted from one planet to the other somehow. It grows on both planets perfectly well; but occasionally—to maintain vigor, I imagine—there must be cross-fertilization, the two strains mingling. That sort of thing happens on Earth often enough."

"Cross-fertilization for vigor? Yes."

"But *we* were the agents that arranged for the mingling. We landed on one planet and were coated with pollen. Remember the blooms closing? That must have been just after they released their pollen; and that's what was making us sneeze, too. Then we landed on the other planet and knocked the pollen off our clothes. A new hybrid strain will start up. We were just a pair of two-legged bees, Chouns, doing our duty by the flowers."

Chouns smiled tentatively, "An inglorious role, in a way."

"Hell, that's not it. Don't you see the danger? Don't you see why we have to get back home *fast*?"

"Why?"

"Because organisms don't adapt themselves to nothing. Those plants seem to be adapted to interplanetary fertilization. We even got paid off, the way bees are; not with nectar, but with Gamow sightings."

"Well?"

"Well, you can't have interplanetary fertilization unless something or someone is there to do the job. *We* did it this



time, but we were the first humans ever to enter the cluster. So, before this, it must be non-humans who did it; maybe the same non-humans who transplanted the blooms in the first place. That means that somewhere in this cluster there is an intelligent race of beings; intelligent enough for space-travel. And Earth must know about that."

Slowly Chouns shook his head.

Smith frowned. "You find flaws somewhere in the reasoning?"

Chouns put his head between his own palms and looked miserable. "Let's say you've missed almost everything."

"What have I missed?" demanded Smith, angrily.

"Your cross-fertilization theory is good, as far as it goes, but you haven't considered a few points. When we approached that stellar system, our hyperatomic motor went out of order in a way the automatic controls could neither diagnose nor correct. After we landed, we made no effort to adjust them. We forgot about them, in fact; and when you handled them later you found they were in perfect order, and were so unimpressed by that that you didn't even mention it to me for another few hours.

"Take something else: How conveniently we chose landing spots near a grouping of animal life on both planets. Just luck? And our incredible confidence in the good will of the creatures. We never even bothered checking atmospheres for trace poisons before exposing ourselves.

"And what bothers me most of all is that I went completely crazy over the Gamow sightings. Why? They're valuable, yes, but not *that* valuable—and I don't generally go overboard for a quick buck."

Smith had kept an uneasy silence during all that. Now he said, "I don't see that any of that adds up to anything."

"Get off it, Smith; you know better than that. Isn't it obvious to you that we were under mental control from the outside?"

Smith's mouth twisted and caught halfway between derision and doubt. "Are you on the psionic kick again?"

"Yes; facts are facts. I told you that my hunches might be a form of rudimentary telepathy."



"Is that a fact, too? You didn't think so a couple of days ago."

"I think so now. Look, I'm a better receiver than you, and I was more strongly affected. Now that it's over, I understand more about what happened because I received more. Understand?"

"No," said Smith harshly.

"Then listen further. You said yourself the Gamow sighters were the nectar that bribed us into pollination. *You* said that."

"All right."

"Well, then, where did they come from? They were Earth products; we even read the manufacturer's name and model on them, letter by letter. Yet, if no human beings have ever been in the cluster, where did the sighters come from? Neither one of us worried about that, then; and you don't seem to worry about it even now."

"Well—"

"What did you do with the sighters after we got on board ship, Smith? You took them from me; I remember that."

"I put them in the safe," said Smith defensively.

"Have you touched them since?"

"No."

"Have I?"

"Not as far as I know."

"You have my word I didn't. Then why not open the safe now?"

Smith stepped slowly to the safe. It was keyed to his fingerprints, and it opened. Without looking, he reached in. His expression altered and with a sharp cry he first stared at the contents then scrabbled them out.

He held four rocks of assorted color, each of them roughly rectangular.

"They used our own emotions to drive us," said Chouns softly, as though insinuating the words into the other's stubborn skull one at a time. "They made us think the hyperatomics were wrong so we could land on one of the planets; it didn't matter which, I suppose. They made us think we had precision instruments in our hand after we landed on



one so we would race to the other."

"Who are they?" groaned Smith. "The tails or the snakes? Or both?"

"Neither," said Chouns. "It was the plants."

"The plants? The *flowers*?"

"Certainly. We saw two different sets of animals tending the same species of plant. Being animals ourselves, we assumed the animals were the masters. But why should we assume that? It was the plants that were being taken care of."

"We cultivate plants on Earth, too, Chouns."

"But we eat those plants," said Chouns.

"And maybe those creatures eat their plants, too."

"Let's say I know they don't," said Chouns. "They maneuvered us well enough. Remember how careful I was to find a bare spot on which to land."

"I felt no such urge."

"You weren't at the controls; they weren't worried about you. Then, too, remember that we never noticed the pollen, though we were covered with it—not till we were safely on the second planet. Then we dusted the pollen off, on order."

"I never heard anything so impossible."

"Why is it impossible? We don't associate intelligence with plants, because plants have no nervous systems; but these might have. Remember the fleshy buds on the stems? Also, plants aren't free-moving; but they don't have to be if they develop psionic powers and can make use of free-moving animals. They get cared for, fertilized, irrigated, pollinated, and so on. The animals tend them with single-minded devotion and are happy over it because the plants make them feel happy."

"I'm sorry for you," said Smith, in a monotone. "If you try to tell this story back on Earth, I'm sorry for you."

"I have no illusions," muttered Chouns, "yet—what can I do but try to warn Earth. You see what they do to animals."

"They make slaves of them according to you."

"Worse than that. Either the tailed creatures, or the snake things, or both, must have been civilized enough to have developed space-travel once; otherwise, the plants couldn't be on both planets. But once the plants developed psionic pow-



ers (a mutant strain perhaps) that came to an end. Animals at the atomic stage are dangerous. So they were made to forget; they were reduced to what they are.— Damn it, Smith, those plants are the most dangerous things in the Universe. Earth must be informed about them, because some day Earthmen may be entering that cluster.”

Smith laughed. “You know, you’re completely off-base. If those plants really had us under control, why would they let us get away to warn the others?”

Chouns paused. “I don’t know.”

Smith’s good humor was restored. He said, “For a minute, you had me going, I don’t mind telling you.”

Chouns rubbed his skull violently. Why *were* they let go? And for that matter, why did he feel this horrible urgency to warn Earth about a matter with which Earthmen would not come into contact for millennia perhaps?

He thought desperately and something came glimmering. He fumbled for it, but it drifted away. For a moment he thought desperately that it was as though the thought had been *pushed* away; but then that feeling, too, left.

He knew only that the ship had to remain at full thrust; that they had to hurry.

So, after uncounted years, the proper conditions had come about again. The protospores from two planetary strains of the mother plant met and mingled, sifting together into the clothes and hair and ship of the new animals. Almost at once, the hybrid spores formed; the hybrid spores that alone had all the capacity and potentiality of adapting themselves to a new planet.

The spores waited quietly, now, on the ship which, with the last impulse of the mother plant upon the minds of the creatures aboard, was hurtling them at top thrust toward a new and ripe world where free-moving creatures would tend their needs.

The spores waited with the patience of the plant (the all-conquering patience no animal can ever know) for their arrival on a new world—each, in its own tiny way, an explorer—



# ALL ABOUT "THE THING"

(A PARODY IN VERSE)

by Randall Garrett

. . . speaking of monsters, Hollywood horrors, and alien intelligences . . .

The monster here belongs to John W. Campbell, Jr., editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*—a little horror he created back in 1938 in his alter ego of Don A. Stuart in a novelette entitled "Who Goes There?"

Some ten or twelve years later, Hollywood heard that science-fiction was a coming thing. "Who Goes There?" was one of the first stories sold to the movies in the early "boom," and after a publicity campaign to end all, *THE THING* stalked through the moving picture palaces of the country in a positive horror of a picture.

Randall Garrett, as alien an intelligence as I have known, apparently felt that the record needed setting straight, so he wrote the story all over again (in simplified form, designed for reading by creature-movie fans).

HERE'S A TALE of chilling horror  
For the sort of guy who more or  
Less thinks being an explorer  
Is the kind of life for him.  
If he finds his life a bore, he  
Ought to read this gory story,  
For he'll find exploratory  
Work is really rather grim.

For the story starts by stating  
That some guys investigating



The Antarctic are debating  
On exactly what to do  
With a monster they've found frozen  
Near the campsite they have chosen,  
And the quarrel grows and grows, un-  
Til they're in an awful stew.

There's a guy named Blair who wants to r-  
Eally check up on this monster  
And dissect it. To his conster-  
Nation, everyone's in doubt.  
So, of course, he starts in pleading,  
And the rest of them start heeding  
All his statements, and conceding  
That the Thing should be thawed out.

So they let this Thing of evil  
Start to melt from its primeval  
Sheath of ice; they don't perceive a l-  
Ot of trouble will ensue.  
When the Thing is thawed, it neatly  
Comes to life, and, smiling sweetly,  
It absorbs some men completely,  
Changing them to monsters, too!

Now we reach the story's nub, ill-  
Uminating all the trouble:  
Each new monster is a double  
For the men they each replace.  
Since it seems a man's own mother  
Couldn't tell one from the other,  
These guys all watch one another,  
Each with fear upon his face.

And so then the men are tested  
To see who has been digested,  
And who's been left unmolested.  
But the test don't work! It's hexed!  
So each man just sits there, shrinking



From the others, madly thinking,  
As he watches with unblinking  
Gaze, and wonders—*Who Goes Next?*

Now, they've found that executing  
Monsters can't be done by shooting;  
They require electrocuting,  
Or cremation with a torch.  
When they find these Things, they grab 'em;  
They don't try to shoot or stab 'em;  
With high-voltage wires, they jab 'em  
'Til their flesh begins to scorch.

So the entire expedition  
Eye each other with suspicion,  
For they're in a bad position,  
And there's no denying *that!*  
Now, to clear this awful scramble,  
The ingenious Mr. Campbell,  
Suddenly, without preamble,  
Pulls a rabbit from the hat.

Here's the way they solve the muddle:  
They discover that a puddle  
Of a pseudo-human's blood'll  
Be a little monster, too!  
With this test for separating  
Men from monsters, without waiting,  
They start right in liquidating  
All the monsters in the crew.

Thus, the story is completed,  
And the awful Thing's defeated,  
But he still was badly treated;  
It's a shame, it seems to me.  
Frozen since the glaciation,  
This poor Thing's extermination  
Is as sad as the cremation  
Of the hapless Sam McGee.



# PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER, THEY SPELL MONSTER

by Ray Russell

In 1948-49, book publishers discovered science-fiction; in 1950-51, Hollywood confirmed the Great Discovery; in the fall of '52, in the company of a couple of hundred others, like myself, who had wangled press invitations to a special preview of "Destination Moon" at the Hayden Planetarium, I sat crick-necked and happy, gazing upward at the film projected on the planetarium dome, experiencing the fulfillment of a group dream. We actually saw space travel. And we also saw the emergence of what had been an esoteric—even crackpot—interest into the broad field of mass entertainment.

"Destination Moon" was good. We forgot about "The Thing," and waited for the spate of s-f movies to come. They came, all right—right in the footsteps of that "Thing." (What hurts, you see—way deep down—is that the mud-daubed parade of shambling papier-maché monsters is *still* called "science-fiction.") The following article, somewhat foreshortened, is editor Ray Russell's report to *Playboy* readers on the "creature-movie" situation five years later.

"HAVE YOU A BETTER ANIMAL?" inquired a Columbia producer of a screenwriter via interoffice memo earlier this year. "They gave up gorillas at Universal and created the creature from beneath the sea, and it gave horror pictures new life."

The screenwriter, a good friend of the present chronicler, passed on the memo for my delectation. Being a rabid monster enthusiast from way back, I was at once seized by nostalgia for the simple horror films of yore; the days of the



common, or garden, monster that could be whipped up in one's home laboratory or discovered, after a little shopping around, in a friendly neighborhood graveyard. Being of delicate temperament, and rather highly strung, I grew a bit dizzy at this latest example of the growing complexity of modern living. Gasping desperately for breath, I reeled once, then struck a tragic posture and went to my bed with a raging fever of chagrin, "Frankenstein!" I apostrophized in my delirium, "thou shouldst be living at this hour. Dracula! Jekyll! Hyde! Dost thou lie so low? And Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, George Zucco, Lionel Atwill, Lon Chaney, Lon Chaney Junior! Whence? Whither? Where are the ghouls of yesteryear?" A sea of titles swam before my eyes: *Them, It (Came from Outer Space)*, *It (Came from Beneath the Sea)*, *The Thing (from Another World)*, *The Day (the Earth Stood Still)*, *The Day (the World Ended)*, *The Beast (from 20,000 Fathoms)*, *The Phantom (from 10,000 Leagues)*, *The Creature (from the Black Lagoon)*, *The Creature (from the Gray Flannel Lagoon . . .* I was, you see, far gone). Finally, moaning incoherently, I sank into sleep—a sleep fitful and beset by dreams.

I was in a theatre (in my pajamas, of course, bottom half only, let the Freudians make of that what they will), and a box of popcorn was in my hand. Among the other spectators, I recognized several friends of mine, an old flame, my dentist, my old flame's dentist, Marilyn Monroe and John Quincy Adams, all in their pajamas, with the single exception of Miss Monroe: she was in the top half of mine. I doubt the significance of these details and pass them on only in the interests of documentation and good fellowship. A newsreel was in progress (I seem to remember something about Johnny Weissmuller being inaugurated President of the United States), but it was soon over and the main attraction smote the screen with an annihilating blast of neo-Stravinsky. The title was:

## THE

And the subtitle:

STUFF FROM OUTER SPACE



My pulse quickened and my fingers clawed at the popcorn. . . .

"I can't understand it."

The words were spoken by a young fellow with white shoe-polish in his hair and a fascinating network of grease-paint lines on his face. These told me he was Elderly and lent weight to his next utterance: "Never in my entire medical career have I encountered anything remotely like it."

The camera pulled away to reveal the body of a sumptuously shaped starlet, horizontal on a white slab. I was keenly disappointed to see her dead, for she had been unusually active in the newspaper ads—veritably entwined in horror around the H of THE, baring her thighs and eyeballs with equal vigor, and displaying a healthy supply of pearly molars. However, I was too excited to quibble.

A gentleman with prognathous jaws and a belligerent manner asked, "What's the cause of death, Doc?"

The Doctor scratched his head, got a fingernailful of white shoe-polish, and replied softly, "Severe nausea, Lieutenant."

"Brought on by what?"

The Doctor's silence and tight-lipped headshake were eloquent. Eloquent or not, though, he had a line and, by Gadfrey, he was going to say it: "I . . . don't . . . know," he said. And added, "That's more in your department, isn't it—the police—rather than mine?"

It was the Lieutenant's big scene. He played it to the hilt, stalking back and forth, shoving his hands in and out of his pockets, and casting hostile glances alternately at the Doctor and at the camera. "If we only had something to go on!" he ranted. "*Anything*," he whined. "*Anything at all*," he whimpered. "But there isn't a *thing*." A cogent line like this deserved expansion, and the Lieutenant was not a man to stint: "Not one single blessed *thing*!" Then, with a deprecating wave of his hand, he muttered, "Just these big fat globs of strange, unearthly-type goo all over the body, that's all."

"Mmmnnnye-e-ess," said the Doctor (actorese for "Yes"), "but in those strange globs may lie the answer."

"Whaddaya talkin'?" sneered the Lieutenant, growing



more belligerent by the second.

"I suggest we get in touch with Bradstone."

"Who's that? I don't want no Federal men musclin' in on my precinct."

"*Dr. Bradstone*," explained the medico with withering condescension, "is the world's foremost authority on viscosimetry."

"Who? Ha?"

"Viscosimetry, Lieutenant, is the science of measuring viscosity."

"What's viscosity?"

The Doctor pointed to the body and the camera focused sharply on the strange, unearthly-type globs. "Goo," he said, solemnly.

And here the Stravinsky got more neo than ever.

I chewed my popcorn furiously and stole a glance at Marilyn Monroe. She winked with abandon. "Goo," I said, solemnly, and winked back.

On the screen, one scene was melting into another with head-swimming speed. Starlets of diverse dimensions were to be seen going about such workaday pursuits as cooking, gardening, screwing rhinestones into their navels, etc., with such a remarkable degree of studied unconcern that I knew their dooms were sealed. And—sure enough—in each case, a towering shadow entered the picture, the theramin began its timorous wail, and the beauty in question looked over her shoulder, uttered *Scream of Mortal Terror, Female, No. 84-B (Full-Throated)*, and was promptly gripped by severe nausea just at the fade-out.

Newspapers loomed upon the screen:

GOO STRIKES AGAIN!

STRANGE STUFF SLAYS SEXY SIREN!

And *Variety*, shocked at the death of a prominent girl vocalist, reported:

THRUSH HUSHED BY MUSH

"Things," said the Lieutenant, picking his nose with a matchstick, "are getting worse."



"You are not just a-clackin' your prognathous jaws, Buster," quipped a melon-bosomed blonde, undulating into range with a crackle of taffeta and flapping her well-greased eyelids.

"Who are you?"

"Bradstone's the name; Dr. Brenda Bradstone, Girl Viscosimetrist."

"You mean *you're* the—"

"World's foremost authority?" She struck an attitude.

"The same. Where is the latest victim?"

"Well, uh—"

"*One moment.*" The new voice belonged to a young man with broad shoulders and a sincere tilt to his eyebrows who lumbered, profile first, into their midst. "Dr. Bradstone is not entirely correct, Lieutenant," he blathered. "Though possessing a certain proficiency in the field," and here he bowed low to the lady and sized up her ankles, "she is not the world's foremost authority."

"Who is, then, you're so smott?" asked Brenda.

"The author of *Viscosity in a Changing World*, *Viscosity for the Millions*, *How Viscous Are You?* and *Whither Viscosity?* of course. In short, myself."

"Then you're Dr. Quentin Conroy of the Institute for Viscosimetrical Research!"

"The same," said Conroy, striking an attitude.

"Well, Dr. Conroy," said Brenda coldly, striking another attitude and striking, also, the Lieutenant, whose hands had been roving, "it's a pleasure."

"Thank you," smirked Conroy, removing from his satchel a small device resembling a double-barreled rectal thermometer.

"What, pray, is that?" asked Brenda haughtily. "A double-barreled rectal thermometer?"

"It is obvious, Dr. Bradstone," responded Conroy with cool decorum, "that you do not know a capillary viscometer from a hole in the ground."

Brenda sniffed huffily. "If that," she said, writhing with ambivalence and lamping her opponent's shoulders with something more than scientific interest, "is a Thorpe and



Rodger viscometer, or even a Wilhelm Ostwald viscometer, I'll eat it."

"It is neither," came the sharp riposte. "It is a Conroy viscometer. Now shake your butt and help me set up my equipment."

"Yes, sir," mumbled Brenda submissively.

Having made this obeisance to the spirit of scientific discussion and also putting half the audience to sleep, the scene now shifted to the city room of a local newspaper. The screen was a riot of shirtsleeves, blue pencils, green eyeshades and cigarette smoke. The city editor, picking his nose with a blue pencil, was snarling at an unkempt but earnest young man. "Yurroutaya mind, Pfeiffer," he said. "Just because"—here he paused to suck a dram of coffee from a soggy container—"just because the first goo killing coincided with reports of a flying saucer sighted in the hills near town, and just because a few hundred nitwits say they've seen a weird monster fifty feet tall walkin' around, and just because a bunch of boobs swear they've been hearin' some strange, unearthly-type theramin music the last few days—you get the dim-bulb notion that these broads are bein' knocked off by a creature from outer space! Pfeiffer, you kill me. You know what I think? You really wanna know what I think?"

"What, boss?"

"Yurroutaya mind, Pfeiffer, that's what I think. Go get me another pint o' java."

The city editor, I noted, was cast from the same rugged mold as the police lieutenant: in fact, upon closer inspection, I discovered that he was played by the same actor, his bushy hair covered with liquid latex to simulate a lumpy baldness. I admired this stroke of economy.

Pfeiffer, of course (if I may condense the action a bit here) took his story to the Lieutenant and was promptly catalogued as a troublesome illusionary. Conroy, however, overhearing the reporter's theory, got a faraway look in his eye and, loosening his Countess Mara, began to wade into his work with renewed bustle.

Two lap-dissolves and a theramin solo later, Conroy looked up from his viscometer. His face was pale, his eye-



brows knotted. "It's—incredible!" he said. "And yet—why should it be incredible? If, on our world, all living things have a basis of carbon, why then on other worlds may not life have a basis of something else? Silicon, or hydrogen, or—*this*?"

"Quentin," breathed Brenda quietly, looking soulfully into his hair-line (they had reached the First Name Stage while I wasn't looking), "what is it?"

"The stuff," said Conroy, "the horrible goo on the bodies . . ." He broke off, consulted his viscometer once more, then looked up again, nostrils akimbo. "Yes! Brenda, the monster that killed those poor girls, the monster that, even now, is roaming at large: that monster is a fifty-foot blob of—Vaseline!"

"*Vaseline?!?*"

Conroy nodded grimly. "With hair."

"Yurroutaya mind," said the Lieutenant.

"But . . . but . . ." floundered Brenda, forgetting her lines, "but Vaseline is harmless . . ."

"Yes—Vaseline as *we* know it," Conroy agreed. "But what if it were endowed with *a superhuman intelligence beyond our ken???*"

"Yeah," said the Lieutenant, "but even so—"

"Lieutenant," Conroy said evenly, "picture it. What would *you* do if you saw a blob of Vaseline fifty feet high and all covered with hair coming at you?"

The Lieutenant's eyes grew glassy at the image; then he clapped his hand to his mouth and lurched straight for the washroom.

"It all fits together, Quentin," said Brenda, breathing heavily. "The severe nausea—the globs of goo—the flying saucer—the theramin music. But what is this monster's purpose in killing these girls? And why only girls?"

Conroy frowned. "I . . . don't . . . know," he said.

And suddenly the monster was upon us. The screen was filled with hairy Vaseline—fifty feet of it, strolling oafishly down the road and humming to itself. John Quincy Adams clapped his hand to his mouth and was never seen again. My dentist climbed up the theatre wall, and Marilyn Monroe



clung to me (understandably) for comfort. My popcorn, of course, went flying at the first sight of the monster, and for a moment I was blinded by salt and falling kernels.

When my vision cleared, I saw to my horror that Brenda was in the toils of the unearthly-type creature and was giving the theramin some stiff competition in the wailing department. Next we saw Conroy, his viscometer awry, pointing wildly and yelling, "It's taking her toward the hills!"

"The hills!" echoed Pfeiffer, the reporter, materializing from behind a clothes-tree. "That's where the flying saucer was sighted!"

After some scratchy stock footage of Grant Withers and Onslow Stevens climbing in a couple of '35 Chevies and barelling down the road, we got our first glimpse of the saucer. It was made of Limoges china, trimmed with blue. The monster oozed into the picture, lugging Brenda, whose struggles had grown noticeably lacking in sincerity. The armed services had apparently been summoned, for we were now treated to stirring shots of the U. S. infantry, the Polish cavalry, and the air force of an unidentified nation, all engaged in dust-raising activity of one sort or another, culminating in the detonation of the hydrogen bomb. Needless to say, these efforts left the monster unscathed. By the time Conroy and Pfeiffer arrived, it had miraculously released Brenda, however, and she ran toward her colleague.

"Brenda!" said Conroy. "You're all right! It let you go . . . and you didn't get severe nausea . . . What—"

Panting, Brenda said, "I found out everything. That theramin music—it's Morse code. The goo told me the whole story. He didn't want to kill those girls; they just got deathly ill at the sight of him. He was only looking for a mate. He's lonely."

"A mate?! But he's—that is—he doesn't have any—I mean—"

"You don't understand, Quentin. Look at my eyelids."

"They're ravishing."

"What else?"

"They're well-greased."

"Correct. *With Vaseline!*"



"You mean—"

"Exactly! All those other girls greased their eyelids with Vaseline, too. And the stuff from outer space was just looking for someone of his own kind!"

"Amazing!" Conroy embraced her. "You're wonderful, Brenda! A true scientist. Brenda, darling—will you marry me? Together, we will plumb new depths of viscosity!"

"YurROUTAYA mind," said Brenda. "I'm going home with Pete."

"Pete??"

Brenda sighed ecstatically. "I can't pronounce his real name. I call him Pete because he's made of petroleum jelly—Vaseline to you."

"What? You're going back to his native planet with *him*?"

"Yes, isn't it wonderful? Talk about plumbing new depths of viscosity—man, he's *really* viscous! I'll be doing the cause of viscosimetry a great service. Besides," she added, with a libidinous growl, "I always was a sucker for tall, hairy guys."

Hand-in-pseudopod, Brenda and Pete walked toward the flying saucer as the music climbed to great heights. It was still neo, but this time it was more like Tschaikowsky than Stravinsky. Conroy took it like a man, blinked back a tear, packed his viscometer, and walked slowly in the opposite direction.

The lights in the theatre went up and I became suddenly aware of the coldness of the leather seat on which I was sitting. A sudden fear gripped me and I looked down to find it confirmed. Somehow, by the wizardry of dreams, I was now clad in only the tops—rather than the bottoms—of my pajamas. Furtively, I looked at Marilyn. *She* was wearing the bottoms. I found this turn-of-events charming and, as I left the theatre with her, hand-in-pseudopod, I did not even try to understand the transference. That would require, I knew, a superhuman intelligence beyond my ken.



## DIGGING THE WEANS

by Robert Nathan

*From Hollywood to Harper's, via Far Future Transit.*

Ray Russell, from the eminence of his editorial chair in the newest and shiniest of publishing successes, may sneer (past the glossy heads of waiting ranks of would-be Playmates) at Hollywood and anything it has to offer.

Robert Nathan, one of the most durable successes in the fantasy business, from his home in Hollywood (circa 3500?), surveys the rest of the continent (standing on tiptoe, perhaps, to see past the shaggy, scaled, and betentacled crania of the "creatures") with at least equivalent scorn.

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE NORTH WALL of the temple at Pound-Laundry on the east coast of the Great West Continent has finally been deciphered by the team led by Sr. B'Han Bollek. This work brings us certain assurance of the theory expressed by Bes Nef, Hanh Shui, and Nat Obelgerst-Levy that a people of considerable numbers and power formerly inhabited this salt and desolate land. It is a triumph for those archaeologists who have been working ever since the fortunate discovery of an ivory cross and string of beads at the northeast, or "Bosstin" tumulus, along with a rusted iron wheel which seems to have been designed to run along some kind of track or trolley. These artifacts, as everyone knows, are now in the museum at Kenya.

What we have been unable to discover is the fate of these ancient people. That they perished in some sort of upheaval many thousands of years ago is clear from the inscription itself, which Sr. B'Han Bollek translates as follows: "nor [for north?] rain nor hail nor snow . . ." there are some



hieroglyphics missing, and the inscription ends with the phrase . . . "their appointed rounds."

However, it must be remembered that the *r* and the *w* are readily interchangeable, both in Hittite and in ancient Hivite, and Bes Nef prefers the reading: "their pointed wounds." This naturally suggests a catastrophe, possibly an invasion from the east, a belief, I may add, greatly encouraged by the findings in the Valley of the Sun, which will be discussed later. On the other hand, if, as some believe, including B'Han Bollek, that the phrase should be read: "their appointed rounds," the meaning of the full inscription might well be as follows: "The north rain, the hail and the snow [also from the north] have accomplished their appointed 'rounds' [or tasks]" . . . namely, have annihilated the inhabitants.

So much, then, we do know; but very little else is known of these ancient people. Professor Shui believes that they may have been Brythons, and related to the still older, Druidic culture whose stones are still to be seen in the East Island. Professor Shui bases this theory upon a certain similarity in the two glyphs, the Brythonic "bathe" and the Wean "bath"; but his theory necessarily comes to grief when one examines the glyph for "that which rises"—the Brythonic "lift" and the Wean "elevator" having obviously no common root.

I have called these people the Weans, because certain archaeological findings incline us to the belief that they called their land the We, or the Us; actually, in the southern part of the continent, the word Weuns (or Weans) does appear, as well as the glyph for Wealls, and the word They-uns.

To return for a moment to the theory of catastrophe, and the "pointed wounds" of Bes Nef. In the Valley of the Sun there have been unearthed many bronze, and tin, and even stone figures of what would seem to be a kind of huge praying mantis. There are many groups of such figures, usually including male and female, and sometimes with young; it is curious that in every case the male figure is larger and more powerful than the female, which we know to be untrue in



the case of the actual praying mantis. These figures nevertheless have the small, cruel head, the long savage arms, the spindly legs, and the attenuated bodies of the mantis. Is it possible that a civilization of men and women, more or less like ourselves, might have been overwhelmed by an invasion of mantis-like insects? Where could they have come from? and where did they go? The conjecture is, of course, fascinating; but no mantis skeletons or remains of any kind have been found, except the above-mentioned statues.

Pound-Laundry is in itself the richest of the diggings. It is believed that at one time this city (for recent excavations indicate "the laundry," as we call it, to have been a city of considerable culture) may at one time have been, in fact, the capital of We, or at least to have had some political or historic importance. Obelgerst-Levy translates the first word of the name as "washing"; the second is obviously the sign for "weight." It is not known what—if anything—was washed there.

In the middle mound, or Cha'ago, near the Lakes, there have been unearthed several paintings; badly discolored, they yet show enough to prove that the inhabitants of Cha'ago were not entirely without visual art. However, they show almost nothing else. They portray squares, lines, lozenges, and mathematical figures; perhaps they were used in some way by the astrologers of the period. One finds no recognizable human face or figure. We cannot be sure what the Weans of Cha'ago looked like.

(In this relation, it is interesting to note that among the artifacts unearthed at Cha'ago were some unbroken jars and other ceramic objects; also statues of what appear to be eggs, and certain nightmare shapes in stone, iron, and bronze. One is allowed to wonder if there was not some correspondence between these art objects and the praying mantises who may have taken over the country. It is also believed that the Weans had music, but so far at least only a few brass instruments and some drums and cymbals have been found; no sounds have come down to us from those faraway people except a high rasping cry from a slender horn-like object found in Oleens.)



To return again to the matter of what the Weans may have looked like; no human bones have been found. Although we have turned up many artifacts of the period, we have nothing for the anthropologists to work on. It is probable that the bones of these people were brittle, and turned to chalk soon after interment.

The greatest difficulty in reconstructing the life of the Weans has not been the deciphering of the inscriptions and the scrolls—due to the brilliant work of Professors Bollek and Shui—but the fact that the Weans, unlike the true ancients, used little gold, preferring to build everything of steel or other metal, and of some curious substance which Bes Nef translates as “gastric,” or “plastric.” As a result, little is left for the archaeologist. Stone was used mainly for monuments, as was bronze, but those which have been uncovered are too heavily encrusted with bird-droppings to be easily recognizable. One theory is that the Weans collected guano; but it is not known what they did with it.

It is here, for the first time, that I must take issue with my esteemed colleague, Professor Kowly of the Institute for Ancient Arts and Letters, who has discovered in one of the scrolls at Pound-Laundry a glyph of what he believes to be a bird-man. Professor Kowly sees in this some correspondence to the djinn of the even more ancient civilizations of Akad and Sumer. While agreeing in the translation of the glyph, I must dispute its meaning: I believe it to have a purely domestic significance, and not religious at all. For one thing, it is often found along with the glyph of a woman, and the sign of a host, or hosts; there seems to be another letter between the final *t* and the *s*, possibly an *a* or an *e*, which would make it *hostas* or *hostes*. I cannot help but see this as a picture of an ordinary family, the man in winged splendor, as befits a husband, the woman merely one of a number, or host (or *hostes*).

In this relation, it is interesting to note that the Hittite plural, in the feminine gender, often adds the *e*. I am not one of those who hold that these unknown Weans were actually Hittites, although I admit to some strange correspondences. In any case, a Sumerian djinn would never be found



accompanied by a woman, unless she were a sorceress. There is no suggestion that the woman-hostes was in fact a witch or sorceress, which I believe effectively disposes of Kowly's untenable hypothesis.

Apropos of the mounds or tumuli of the Weans, each one of which appears to contain and cover the ruins of a city or congregation of habitations, an expedition under Hulay-Beneker has been for several seasons in the field in search of a mound thought to cover the most extensive congregation of all. The name of this lost city, or congregation, which is believed to have been more influential in Wean affairs than Pound-Laundry itself, was—as deciphered by both Eretebbe and Bes Nef—Mil Town. So far no trace of it has been found.

All that we have been able to learn of Wean manners and customs we have been obliged to decipher from the copper and silver tablets found in the mounds, and in the Valley of the Sun in the southwestern part of the country. As a matter of fact, it would appear that a considerable civilization flourished in the southwest, not in any way inferior to the middle mound at Cha'ago, or to the eastern tumuli such as n.yok. Here, in transcription, is Bes Nef's account of a religious occasion, translated from scrolls found in the Valley:

“[for that] he did cause them . . . [by] rock and roll . . . to [give out] cries and screams . . . loudly . . . and . . . in the corridors <sup>1</sup> . . . in syncope <sup>2</sup> . . .”

The word “roll” or “rolls” suggest a feast, possibly a feast of communion on a grand scale. So far no one has been able to explain the presence of the word “rock.”

However, it is apparent that the people came together, and were seized by an ecstasy of some sort in which they lost reason and decorum. This belief is further strengthened by another scroll found in the same tumulus, in which the scribe reports: “and the spirit came down.”

<sup>1</sup> “Columns”—Bollek. “Aisles”—Obelgerst-Levy.

<sup>2</sup> “Syncopation”—Obelgerst-Levy. But this makes no sense, apparently.



So the evidence points to the fact that the Weans were a religious people. There is additional witness in a silver coin dug up in one of the smaller mounds, which carries the inscription "In God We Trust"—or "Trusted." The translation is by the Bantu scholar, Eretebbe; the tense of the verb "to trust" is obscure.

Neither Eretebbe nor any other member of the Academy has as yet been able to discover what god was meant. It is extremely unlikely that these ancient people had only one; inscriptions found among the ruins of Pound-Laundry suggest, in fact, a number of religious differences among them. There are definite traces of Hebrew culture in the ruins of n.yok; and although nothing has so far been found at Pound-Laundry to suggest Babylonian or early Egyptian influences, there are hints here and there of the Cyprian cult of Antinous, particularly among the arts.

It is probable, too, that the Weans worshiped, among others, a sort of horse-god or centaur. Professor Rass points out that the fragment unearthed at s.nita, and known as the Rass fragment, contains the unmistakable glyph for "horse," and the simple statement: "Schwaps [schnaps?] was first." Yet another glyph, found not far from s.nita, is that of a bearded god; it, too, states that "Schwepps [schwaps?] was first."

In this regard, it is interesting to note that in a fragment unearthed at Oleens, and known as the Oleens fragment, the word "schnaps" is written: "cocacola," which was the name of an Aztec root-deity.

In politics we are on surer ground. It is possible to say with absolute certainty, from scrolls unearthed at Pound-Laundry, and also from the ancient city of Bostin, or Bosstin, known to archaeologists as mound x-5, that the Weans were divided into hegemonies or states, each ruled by a theocrat or autocrat, and all loosely joined in a confederacy under one ruler (who, however, was not a theocrat) whose duty it was to retire after an interval varying in length from four to twelve years, and to issue warnings and oracles. These groups, or states, were in turn divided into counties, which were in turn divided into wards. As for the



system of government itself, it appears to have been conducted by means of barter, each county or state getting what it could for itself in exchange for helping its neighbor to do the same.

Public servants, we know, were paid little; they were expected to enrich themselves as best they could in private. When this enrichment, which was illegal, was discovered, they were beheaded. This curious fact did not keep the majority of Weans from seeking public office; but one is forced to conclude, from inscriptions found at Nassaw, that the most admired citizens lived in actual poverty, and rarely spoke at all, except in musical sounds or mathematical formulae. As we have already seen, no musical sounds have come down to us, which is unfortunate.

It is true that two scrolls, bound each in oblong form, were found by the team of Haph-Bukong and Sumer, digging one winter among the ruins of what may once have been some sort of library. That it may have been a repository of many such scrolls—or as we should say “books”—is suggested by the remains of metal shelves which may have held the scrolls (or else jellies, but informed opinion veers toward the scrolls).

Unfortunately, both scrolls, though easily legible, due to the brilliant work of the scholars Bes Nef and Obelgerst-Levy, are unintelligible; that is to say, the words, although translatable, make no sense when put together. One of these scrolls appears to be an account of a god or hero named Finigan, or Finnegan; the size of the scroll and its rare state of preservation attest to its importance as a religious or historical document, but it is impossible to make out what happens to him. The second scroll is in what appears to be a metrical, or verse form; nothing can be gathered from it at all.

A tablet unearthed at n.yok gives us a welcome glimpse into business transactions in We. “[Having] borrowed a million,” it reads in the transcription of B’Han Bollek, “[I acquired] thereby credit to twice that amount.” This suggests an economy not unlike our own: one thinks of the motto of our Treasury Department: “To the Borrower, All.”



Throughout history there has never been anything more useful than credit, to establish credit. Without a debt, there is nothing.

As for the history of these interesting and almost unknown ancestors <sup>1</sup> of ours, no more is known than is known of the Romans, and later the Brythons: they established themselves in the land by killing off the native tribes already there, and built their empire by the sword; when the sword rusted, they perished, along with Egypt, Babylon, and Greece, leaving behind them only these curious mounds, some scrolls, monuments, and glyphs, a few statues of eggs and mantises, and no music.

<sup>1</sup> Nat Obelgerst-Levy denies that the Wean were ancestors of ours.



# TAKE A DEEP BREATH

by Roger Thorne

It has become axiomatic, though none the less true, that advances in the technology of communication can be a double-edged sword: bringing individuals closer together and increasing their understanding of each other; or imposing a kind of mass subservience to the spoken (or written) word, producing a herd man, unthinking, who understands nothing except what he is told.

*Sit down . . . make yourself comfortable . . . relax . . . that's the idea . . . take a deep breath . . . go ahead . . . a real deep breath . . . hold it just for a second . . . now . . . very very slowly . . . let it out . . . slowly, mind! . . . There! . . . Feel better, don't you? . . . Feel relaxed . . . at ease . . . at peace with the world . . . and it's a wonderful feeling, isn't it? . . . Feel a little sleepy, maybe? . . . Go ahead and yawn, you're among friends . . . a big yawn . . . feels good, doesn't it? . . . Close your eyes if you feel like it . . . why not? . . . Steal a little cat nap . . . nobody will mind . . . just take another deep breath . . . . . close your eyes . . . let it out slowly . . . and while you do . . . let your mind drift . . . drift on the calm sea . . . drift on the clouds . . . drift . . . drift . . . drift like the subtle scent of Oriental tobaccos . . . blended by masters . . . to please your restful hour . . . to fulfill your deepest drifting desires . . . drifting . . . drifting . . . drifting desires . . . and where . . . in what cigarette . . . can this fulfillment be found? . . . In Navigator . . . Navigator . . . Navigator and no other . . . ask for it alone . . . it and no other . . . Navigator alone and no other . . . Navigator . . .*



IT BEGAN LIKE THAT: a smooth-voiced announcer speaking gently but authoritatively against a background of soporific music. Next to him, centered on the TV screen, a gyroscope—the Navigator trademark—spinning slowly, evenly.

Restful it was: a pleasant change, a novelty, the first time you encountered a Navigator commercial. Refreshing, after a spate of hysterical barkers, hopped-up jingles, neurotic cartoons, the endless frantic urges to buy, buy, buy.

And the public appreciated the new approach. I know. I wrote a column for a TV magazine at the time, and my mail was full of letters from viewers “in all walks of life,” as they say. Stuff like: “It is certainly a relief to be treated like an adult for once. The Navigator cigarette people ought to be commended . . .” (impeccably typed under a lawyer’s letterhead). Or: “Them adds for Navigator are the best ever out they sure do sound nice & they are not so loud like most . . .” (hard lead pencil on ruled paper).

I welcomed the letters. They filled a lot of space in my column. I printed some of the most typical, and prefaced them with: “Navigator will be glad to know their relaxed, mesmeric commercials are making a hit with the public. Here’s what a few viewers have to say.” It was an easy column to write—just two sentences—but it elicited an inquiry from the Beaumont Agency, asking if I would be interested in working for them.

When their letter came, I wondered how they happened to have picked me. I did a little research on the telephone and found out that one of their clients was Navigator. That was the connection, obviously, but *why*? I was familiar enough with my column to know that its style was not likely to seduce lucrative offers from ad agencies.

What could I lose? I made an appointment with Mr. Beaumont himself and saw him the next day.

It was a small agency. Beaumont was in his mid-fifties: short, compact, with vaguely saurian features. His iron gray hair was clipped short and white at the temples and his ears were set flush against his bullet head.

“Hi. I’m Ted Beaumont. Pull up a chair.” That, in a gravel voice, and a quick handshake started the interview. Forty-



five minutes later, I was shaking his hand again and he was saying, "See you next month."

I got the job, at a figure so high I had to stifle an involuntary gasp when he named it. As I rode down to solid earth in the elevator, I realized that I still didn't know exactly why he had wanted to hire me in the first place.

"We're a new agency," Beaumont had told me. "Ideas are welcome here. New ideas, screwy ideas, any ideas. Don't be afraid to suggest it, no matter how different it may be." Before the interview, I had caught another Navigator commercial and had written one along the same lines. Beaumont slipped on a pair of black-rimmed glasses and read it. "You'll do," he said, with a quick alligator grin.

And so, after giving the TV magazine a resignation notice of decent length, I went to work for Beaumont. I submitted several brilliant ideas, but most of them bounced. Despite Beaumont's talk about "new ideas," his policy was as fixed and strict as a Blue Law. Every piece of copy followed the same pattern. "Our formula can be stated in four words," he told me. "*Prestige* (we always use one of those Rock of Gibraltar announcers, never the folksy or casual types), *attention* (the gyroscope, for example), *relaxation* (our copy encourages the listener to loosen up, even sleep), and—most important—*repetition*. Listen to this."

He snapped on a tape recorder and I heard an old commercial: "... *In Navigator . . . Navigator . . . Navigator and no other . . .*"

Pretty soon I got the hang of it and turned out yards of that formless, free-association stuff. Went for weeks without once typing a period or a comma: just hundreds of sets of those spineless three little dots . . .

I handled Navigator exclusively. Wrote all the radio and TV commercials, all the magazine and newspaper ads. The printed stuff Beaumont let go by without much comment: it was the broadcast copy he went over with a fine-toothed comb. We watched Navigator sales anxiously. They were steadily climbing. I felt good about it.

One day, feeling that a writer should be close to his subject, I bought a pack of Navigators and lit one. It was lousy.



Tasted like one of those weird off-brands that cropped up during the war years. I went back to my original brand and kept the pack of Navigators strictly for cadgers.

I didn't think much about it then. After a brief philosophic moment while I pondered the potency of the 20th century adman and flattered myself that a cruddy cigarette was selling great guns only because of my rich beautiful prose, I forgot the incident.

My status grew steadily with the Beaumont Agency. Next to Mr. B. himself, I was the biggest man in the place—because Navigator was our biggest and most important account. Salary hikes came along periodically without my asking: Beaumont seemed determined to keep me happy. One of them was so substantial that I wondered who I was required to do in. “You're going to write the entire TV show for Navigator,” Beaumont told me abruptly.

My jaw dropped. “The whole thing? Gags, continuity, *everything* for the Hymie Davis show?”

“We're dropping Hymie Davis. No more comics for Navigator.” He paused and sat back in his chair, fixing me all the time with his eyes. It was a familiar item out of his bag of tricks, something to preamble any announcement of more than usual weight. At one time it had had an effect on me, but I had grown much too accustomed to it, and the suspense had worn thin. As he looked at me, I could think only of a carnivorous lizard peering through jungle foliage with unblinking eyes.

“You're OK, sport,” he said at last. “You've been doing a good job. I think it's time I let you in on my long-range planning.” He paused again, not as long this time. “Know why I hired you?”

“No.”

“To shut you up. I didn't know, at the time, that I'd got myself such a good man in the bargain. Main thing was to have you here where I could watch you—not out somewhere writing a TV column read by millions.” He fished in his desk and came up with a yellowed clipping. He handed it to me. It was a piece out of my old column. In one phrase, “. . . their relaxed, mesmeric commercials . . . ,” one word



had been heavily circled in pencil: mesmeric.

"You see?" said Beaumont. "You were catching on. I had to get to you, keep you from spilling the beans."

"Catching on? Spilling the beans about what?"

He took time out to light a cigarette. I noticed it was not a Navigator. "That's a touchy word, mesmeric."

I nodded, adding, "But isn't our method essentially the hypnotic technique?"

He blew out a cloud of smoke. "Sure. What advertising isn't? They all use repetition and such devices to hammer home the message. They all try to induce a conditioned reflex of sorts. What we're doing is no different—except that it's more efficient. Talk about penetration!" He chuckled, broke off and shot a question at me. "Ever smoke a Navigator?"

"Just one."

"Lousy, wasn't it?"

"Terrible."

"Seen the latest sales reports?"

"Not the latest . . ."

"Then I've got news for you. Navigator is outselling every other cigarette on the market, cancer scare or not. And it's junk. Can you tell me why?"

It didn't take long for that to sink in. "You're not serious, Ted."

"I am serious. There's no other explanation. No person in his right mind would smoke a Navigator unless he had been *ordered* to smoke it."

He leaned forward. "I discovered Navigator. I looked around to find the shoddiest product on the market. Something absolutely without merit, slated to collapse. Navigator fitted the description perfectly. I offered them my services for a fee so ridiculously cheap they couldn't refuse. And until sales began to pick up, I even bought air time out of my own pocket."

"I don't get it, Ted. Why would you deliberately go out of your way to promote a weed like Navigator?"

"You're slow, boy. It was a test. A dry run. A preliminary before the main event." His lips pulled back and revealed his



teeth: I guess you'd call it a smile for want of a better word. "It worked. That's all I wanted to know. Now I'm ready for the real thing. Are you with me?"

I felt almost hypnotized myself. At any rate, I had always found it difficult to say no to Beaumont. So I nodded, swallowing hard. Yes, I was with him.

He mapped it out. Hymie Davis was to be replaced by a daily quarter-hour of news comment. The standard Navigator commercial would be given by the commentator himself (Hatfield Crain, no less) at the start of the telecast. Almost without modulation of any kind, he would slip into the news of the day: reportage, comment, opinion. Lots of opinion. And, all the while, next to him, a globe of the world would spin slowly, evenly.

I stayed with Beaumont for nearly two years after the news show began. It took that long for me to grasp how really "long-range" his planning was. By that time, it was too late. All I could do was quit. Don't think it was easy. Leaving big money like that is never easy. One morning, however, I didn't go down to the office. Instead, I packed my effects and got on a train to another city. I'm there now, writing catalog copy for an obscure mail-order house. I'm making \$65 a week and the work is pure drudgery, but Beaumont won't find me here.

Once in a great while I sell a piece to a magazine, under a nom-de-plume, to bring in a little extra revenue. That's really the only reason I wrote this. It won't do any *good* you understand. It's too late for that. But at least you'll know the reason when an overwhelming majority votes for Theodore Beaumont at the next presidential election.

Because they will. Just as sure as they lit up Navigators this morning, they will.



## GRANDMA'S LIE SOAP

by Robert Abernathy

I do not know Roger Thorne. I had never read anything of his, before "Take a Deep Breath," and I do not know whether he is an established author, whether he has written any fantasy before, or for that matter, whether his story is fantasy at all.

I do know Robert Abernathy, and I am, I think, inclined to regret my certainty that his story could not be anything but fantasy. It *can't* happen here. . . .

OF COURSE you'll believe this story. Everybody will. The funny thing is that it *could* be a lie . . .

To make that point clearer: A little while ago I happened to be at a gathering of literary amateurs and critics, one of those sprawling aimless affairs where people mill around with drinks in their hands, congealing in little clusters to talk or listen to somebody talk.

I listened. I heard a serious, bespectacled young man discourse not unintelligently on Proust, and I heard a plump gentleman make some safe, sound comments on Faulkner.

Nobody disagreed with them. Nobody argued. Nobody even said, "But—"

I can remember when arguments were the order of the day.

After I'd had a little more of it than I could stand, I spoke up. "Say what you like about those scribblers," I declared firmly, "none of them can hold a candle to Wolf."

"Thomas?" someone asked—not with the air of being about to contradict me, but merely as one sincerely, infuri-



atingly desiring instruction.

"No, *Howling*," I retorted with flamboyant irony. "Do you mean to say you never heard of Howling Wolf, the genius of the North Woods, the greatest author of all time? The one writer who grasped the human soul in all its depth, breadth, and angular momentum? Who painted Life in its true colors on a canvas vast as all Nature, with a non-union brush? Who sounded every note of emotional experience, and rang all the bells in belles lettres? Who—"

I ran out of breath, paused, and added, "Of course, unfortunately all of Wolf's mighty works were written in his native language, which happened to be Chinook Trade Jargon, and they've never been translated. So if you don't know the Jargon . . ."

At my age I should have known better. Naturally, every word I uttered was gospel but all I got back were earnest requests for more information about the great Wolf. To explain that I'd just been kidding—that I say such things experimentally and to keep in practice as one of the few remaining liars in a truthful world—would have been worse than useless. It would have been cruelty to talking animals.

I mumbled, "Pardon me," to all the nice, candid, inquisitive, credulous faces. I grabbed my hat and pulled it over my eyes and ducked out. Not that I imagined I'd get away from the consequences. I could already envisage how the ripples would spread. For a long while to come I'd get inquiries in the mail from literary clubs, collectors, compilers of biographical dictionaries. Probably there'd be a Howling Wolf Commemorative Society organized, and if I told them he was buried at the bottom of the Chicago Drainage Canal, they'd go and strew posies there.

But this is not the story of Howling Wolf. It is the story of Grandma's lie soap.

When I first remember Grandma, back when I was one of the numerous grandchildren—my brothers, sisters, and assorted cousins who overran the old hill-country farm during vacations—she was already a dried-up little old lady who couldn't have weighed ninety pounds, with a brown, wrinkled face and intolerant black eyes.



She ruled the farm with an iron hand and my two taciturn uncles, who did the heavy work, moved silently about, tending to chores, crops, and stock in obedience to her orders. The farm thrived, too. Even in bad years, when other people's corn was stunted and wells ran dry, nothing of the sort befell Grandma.

Sometimes—though I didn't know this until I was older—the neighbors muttered, and insisted, obviously out of envy, there was something queer about Grandma. Queerness they detected, I suppose, in her fondness for cats—which most of the country people tolerated without affection—and in her long walks in the woods by herself, gathering plants that she dried and kept in unlabeled jars.

Too, a tradition had it that back in England in the seventeenth century one of her female ancestors had been accused of bewitching cattle by the celebrated witchfinder, Mr. Samson Broadforks, who fell ill shortly afterward of an ailment believed to be foot-and-mouth disease. Be that as it may, the ancestor in question emigrated to America around that time.

But we children, of course, saw nothing odd about our Grandma. Childishly, we assumed that everybody had a grandmother who kept a piece of lie soap on the high shelf over the washstand.

This was a chunk of strong brown soap, like all the rest of the boiled-fat products that Grandma made in the old iron wash-kettle after hog-killing. But it wasn't ordinary soap. It was made separately and privately, from some of the herbs that Grandma had in her jars, from a recipe she kept in her head and nowhere else.

Because, you see, another thing about Grandma was that she couldn't abide being lied to. Not, I'm sure, out of any abstract devotion to Truth, but simply because the idea of anyone fooling *her* made her furious. If somebody tried it, and that somebody was one of her own grandchildren, she knew what to do . . .

For instance, I can still vividly recall the time when my city cousin Richard first came visiting on the farm. This Richard was a pale, supercilious brat who lived in New York



City. As soon as he made sure that no one else on the farm had been similarly blessed, he sized us up for yokels and set about overawing us with the marvels of the metropolis.

Grandma, busy round the kitchen range, listened silently for a while. But we who knew her well could see the storm warnings going up—the tightening lips and the dangerous gleam in her eye. Richard didn't see anything, naturally. He finished describing the George Washington Bridge and went on to the skyscrapers.

That did it. Grandma slammed a skillet down and fastened a harpy grip on Richard's collar. "Come along, young man," she said grimly. "You needn't think you can pull *my* leg!"

And she wagged him off to the washstand, the rest of us trailing after in delighted horror.

"Oliver"—Grandma addressed me, because I was already a gangling thirteen then—"—reach me down the lie soap!"

I did so, gingerly, and before the bawling Richard knew what was happening he was sputtering through a haze of suds, his mouth thoroughly washed out with the strong soap.

"Now!" said Grandma briskly, releasing him and stepping back. "Take a dipper of water, and then answer me: Were you or weren't you exaggerating when you said there was buildings there ten miles high?"

Richard opened and closed his mouth. He grew red in the face with effort. He said, "N . . . N . . . Yes, ma'am, I was exaggerating."

You could see that he was thunderstruck to find that he couldn't do anything but tell the truth. He had yet to learn what the rest of us knew and took for granted. Once anybody had his mouth washed out with Grandma's lie soap, he could never again in this life speak a falsehood, however much he might want to.

A quarter of an hour later, Grandma had mollified Richard with bread and jam and encouraged him to talk some more. She listened with keen interest as he described the Holland Tunnel, nodding her head occasionally and exclaiming, "My, my! Who would have thought it?"

Now, you see, she knew that every word was true.

If I'd been smarter—but maybe I'm still not smart, except



in hindsight—I might have seen the shape of things to come in that incident. But I wasn't, and I didn't.

At one time or another, all of Grandma's grandchildren got their mouths washed with the lie soap—all but me. Why I was spared, I've often wondered. It wasn't for lack of provocation, that's certain. I've thought perhaps Grandma had an intuitive grasp of scientific method, and kept me as a control. Or . . . well, so far as I know, Grandma was the only one of the family in her generation who possessed the secret of the lie soap, and she didn't pass it on to any of her children, who were all sober, truthful, financially unsuccessful citizens. But I'm pretty sure that Grandma herself never got the lie soap treatment as a child.

I grew up, and summers on the farm receded into memory. I went to college, specialized in chemistry, and emerged with rosy visions of science remaking the world. I fell then, naturally, into a research job with Gorley and Gorley, who at that time were one of the bigger companies making chemicals, synthetics, cleansers, pharmaceuticals and the like.

The laboratories which I shared with a number of other young and not-so-young research men were magnificent, their chrome-and-porcelain splendor making the university labs seem small and dingy by comparison.

Here I had the facilities and—assigned work being light at the time—the spare time to follow up a project of which I'd become enamored in school—a line on antibiotic synthesis. I almost lived in that lab until I had enough results to make up a summary of them, together with an urgent request for materials needed to carry the investigation through.

I submitted this report to the Co-ordinator, a fussy, harassed little man, who nervously promised to call it to the attention of the front office, and assigned me to work on the problem of producing a red detergent powder that would not make pink suds.

Time went by and nothing happened. Naturally I reminded the Co-ordinator, but he assured me that the matter had merely slipped his mind. To make a sad story short, I finally found out how things worked. Communications be-



tween the research department and the front office, i.e. the sales department, went only one way.

When the latter had decided just what sort of epoch-making miracle of modern science the buying public was ripe for, word would come down, and if we happened to have such a miracle on hand, well and good. Otherwise, we could produce it, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, in time for the scheduled start of the advertising campaign.

It was O'Brien who first explained this system in full to me. O'Brien was an Assistant Sales Manager and an advertising man from way back. But he was also a human being.

"Over there with your test tubes, kid," he said bluntly. "You're playing pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey. Sometimes you hit, oftener you miss. But you're never quite sure in advance. Right?"

I had to admit he had hit on a pretty fair description of scientific research in general.

"But," said O'Brien, "by us in Sales it's *hit, hit, hit*, all the time. We can't wait for you boys to get that tail pinned on straight. But sometimes you do, don't you?" He sighed.

"God help us, some of the characters I associate with don't even know that. They can't see any difference between having something to sell and having to sell something. So when you *do* hit, let me know, and I'll see what I can do at my end."

He was as good as his word, too. A couple of times when we'd fumbled around and come up with a product that people really needed, something to keep them from dying, for instance, or to make not dying worth their while, he went to bat for us in the sales department.

I've described at length the situation at Gorley and Gorley, first because it had a direct bearing on what happened later, and second because it was typical of a way of life which is past, and which the younger generation nowadays has difficulty even in imagining. I'm referring, of course, to the middle of the twentieth century with its feverish atmosphere of compulsory Progress or a reasonable facsimile thereof and of the glitter that was sometimes gold.

It was the era of the false front, the false rear and the



questionable middle, of scandal, slander, and the Hard Sell. It was also the Age of the Big Lie, as somebody called it. But it was even more the age of the little half-truth.

During those years when I was growing up—a painful process then, though it doesn't seem to be so any more—my education progressed along other lines as well.

There was my baptism of politics. I joined with the enthusiasts working for nomination of a reform slate of candidates against those of the city machine. We were too innocent to know that it was an unpropitious time. For one thing, it wasn't a Presidential year and the vote was bound to be light; also the last reform administration was still too fresh in public memory, and the machine was riding high.

The opposition called us idealistic crackpots, conniving scoundrels, and dimwits who didn't know what it was all about. They had the money and they spent it on a flood of lies from the platform, through the mail, and from sound trucks that rolled bellowing through the streets. Finally, our candidates were snowed under in the primaries and not so much as a reform dogcatcher appeared on the ticket.

That was another bruising experience for an easy bruiser such as I was. After the crescendo of activity, the speeches, the leaflets, the house-to-house canvasses, after the starry-eyed phrases about cleaning up local government as a first step toward cleaning up the country and the world . . .

I took a freshly disillusioned look at that world. It was a world where the leaders of great nations daily pointed to one another as conspirators plotting to exterminate the human race, and where "security" and fear grew rankly intertwined as the ordinary man learned to swallow the idea that *he* couldn't be trusted with the truth about anything really important. It was a world where, consequently, the scaremongers, the inside scoopers, and the genuine conspirators thrived mightily.

And, finally, there was Alice.

Alice was in the bookkeeping department at Gorley and Gorley. She didn't have the kind of looks that make cover photographers and movie scouts drool and lunge. But she



had something, a spontaneous allure, a magnetism that must surely have upset the IBM machines she worked with.

I met Alice, was magnetized, polarized, and lost. Lost and happy. When I proposed to her, and she said *Yes*, I felt that my good fortune was *too* good to be true. And it was. Some three weeks later she handed back the ring. She couldn't marry me. It had all been a mistake, and so on.

Two days afterward I encountered her by accident in a corridor at the plant. She wore another ring, with a bigger diamond. I stopped her and roughly demanded: "Who?"

Stumblingly she told me. He was a junior executive, a young-man-who-would-go-far with family connections and stock in the company. Alice was a smart girl, and she'd simply bettered herself. I guess I said some rather bitter things on that subject. "No, Oliver," she insisted. "It's not like that at all. It's just that I don't love you. I never did." But she wouldn't meet my eyes.

When I'd cooled down a bit, I realized that she was being honest with me after a fashion. She was lying to me in just the same terms she was lying to herself. And at the same time, recalling little details of her behavior, I realized why.

Alice was afraid. Her people had been poor, and she knew what it meant. Anyway, who *wasn't* afraid in those days, except for the feeble-minded and some of the insane? So she was looking for security, a place to hide, in that world of the nineteen-fifties where there wasn't any place to hide. But what was the use of telling her that?

I did some serious drinking, enough to convince me that I wasn't cut out to make a career of it. It was during the sobering-up process that I got the Idea. I wonder how many of the thoughts that changed the world have been fathered by hangovers?

I had some days' vacation with pay coming, so it was comparatively easy. I took a plane, a train, and a ramshackle bus. I then swung in on a grapevine and there I was, walking up the familiar path to the old farmhouse door, where I hadn't been for a span of years that astonished me when I counted them.

Grandma was out in the back yard hanging out a wash



of patched work shirts and faded blue overalls. She said without surprise, "How do, Oliver," and went right on finishing her task, while I watched with suppressed impatience.

Finally she picked up the empty clothes basket and led the way into the house. It was getting dusk, so she lit a kerosene lamp in the kitchen, where supper was simmering on the cast-iron range.

"Grandma," I fumbled, "I came down here—"

"I can see that," Grandma interrupted. "How do you like my new teeth, Oliver?" She grinned at me alarmingly. "Today's my birthday—ninety-first or ninety-fourth or something like that, I forget—so I went to town and got me my new teeth. Pretty, eh, boy? Figure they ought to do me another ten or twelve years."

"Yes, Grandma," I said, a little dazedly.

She peered at me searchingly. "Well, Oliver? Speak up. You've got troubles written all over you."

I'd more or less rehearsed a persuasive speech, but sitting there in Grandma's lamplit kitchen I felt as if the years had fallen away and I was like a little boy who had run away from home and come back sorry.

In considerable disorder I poured out the story of how I'd gone out into the world and what I'd found it like. I covered all of it, my work and how little it amounted to compared to what it could have meant to me, and my experience with the way people were governed—even Alice. Above all, I told her how at every turning I had been lied to, and had heard people lie to one another, and seen them lie to themselves.

Grandma nodded once or twice as she listened, which encouraged me. I remembered a scrap from the arguments I'd meant to muster: "Some philosopher once said that a lie is the Original Sin itself. Without it, all other crimes become impossible."

"So," Grandma broke in, "you want the recipe for my lie soap."

"Uh . . . yes, that's right," I admitted. "It's the answer. Your ancestors and mine had no right to hold it back this long. Look, Grandma. The company I work for makes



mouth washes, toothpastes, and the like. Millions of people use their products; and if a new 'miracle ingredient' were publicized the right way, other companies with more millions of customers would have to adopt it too."

I was counting on O'Brien. I'd explain it to him squarely, and somehow we'd manage to put it over.

Grandma got up to stir a kettle. I held my breath. Finally she said, "I'm going to give you the recipe, Oliver—"

My heart leaped.

"—but not for ten or twenty years yet. Not until you've learned a mite of caution. I was your age once, myself, and I thought how nice it would be to make the world over tomorrow morning, and sit down and admire it tomorrow afternoon. Now I know better, and so will you."

I pleaded and argued, but it was no use. The old lady was adamant. Finally I fell glumly silent, while Grandma went about setting the table for supper.

On the train coming down I'd bought a newspaper out of sheer habit and, preoccupied, hadn't even opened it. It lay now on the table, and Grandma picked it up to glance at the headlines. Suddenly I realized she'd been standing motionless, staring at the paper, for a remarkably long time. There was a look I'd never seen before on her wrinkled face.

I heard her whisper to herself, "*The Moon!*" But that didn't make any sense until I looked over her shoulder and read:

### *Air Force Rocket Lands on Moon*

Still I didn't understand Grandma's agitation. I said bannally, "Well, we've known for quite a while they were going to try it."

"The Moon!" Grandma repeated. She went on wanderingly, "You know, that just reminds me of one night in a buggy . . ." Her voice trailed off, and she brooded darkly, which was strange indeed in her. Then she let the paper fall and said briskly, "I've changed my mind, Oliver."

"You mean—"

"Yes. You can have the lie soap. I'll write the recipe out and give it to you for a birthday present."



I said stupidly, "It's not my birthday, though."

"No, it's mine." She cackled with a return of the old merriment. She found a stub of pencil, tore off a corner of newspaper, and began writing in a crabbed hand.

As she wrote she muttered, only half to me: "Evening of the day they dropped the Bomb, your Uncle Henry told me: 'Ma, the time's come.' But I said, 'No.' I said, 'People may be crazy, but they're not crazy enough to blow the whole world up and them on it.'"

"But now . . . If there's a Man in the Moon, and he's got a Bomb in his hand and all he's got to do is fling it, what's to stop him? *Him*, he's safe in the Moon . . . *There!*" She held out the scrap of paper. "Go on, boy, do what you like with it, and I hope you like what you do! I held back, I never thought I'd live to see times like these. But there's some duties you just can't shirk, boy, I don't have to tell you that."

Bill, Jerry and I slipped into a booth at the tavern near the plant. Looking across the table at Jerry, I marveled at how well he was keeping up the act, the casual off-hours good-fellowship. As for me, I felt sure my nerves were showing.

While Jerry called Bill's attention to the waitress's walk, I dropped a fast-dissolving white tablet into Bill's drink.

As he picked it up and sipped, I felt a qualm which I ruthlessly stifled. This test *had* to be made. We—Jerry and I, since I'd taken him into my confidence as a man I could trust and a wizard at organic chemistry—had studied the lie-soap formula backward and forward. We'd analyzed samples of it I'd obtained from Grandma, and isolated—or so we thought—the active ingredients. But we had to know, and we could hardly experiment on animals.

Bill set down an empty glass. I grew tenser. Jerry inquired, "Another?" and when Bill shook his head, asked the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question. "So—you've decided to quit lushing around and get some work done for a change?"

That was one of the trick questions we'd settled on—a variation of the old "Have you stopped beating your wife?"



formula. If Bill had been quite normal, he'd have answered, "Hell, no," or, "Yeah, guess I better," or some answer as jocular and meaningless as the question. But if our elixir of lie soap worked, he'd answer—with a peculiar, embarrassed gulp of hesitation:

"But I don't lush around, and I get a good deal of work done."

Which was what he *did* say. Because it was the truth, silly and pompous as it sounded there and then.

I could see Jerry rallying himself to ask some more telling questions, and I knew he was feeling an emotion exactly like mine—exultation curiously mixed with shame.

Both of us realized at that moment, I guess, that it was going to mean no more friendly kidding over a couple of beers, no more harmless insults and bragging, no more fish stories. . . . But of course there's always a price.

I went to O'Brien.

He heard me out without changing expression. When I'd laid all the cards on the table, he said slowly, "If this stuff will really do what you say—"

"It will," I assured him. "It has."

"In that case, my young scientific friend, do you realize what you're asking me to do? I've spent twenty years in the advertising game. You might say I've devoted my life to it. Now you want me to help you with a scheme that'll wipe out advertising as we know it—lock, stock, and barrel."

"I—I hadn't thought of it like that."

"In other words," O'Brien went on, "you're offering me the fulfillment of my fondest dreams. Shake on it, kid!"

Then he settled back and grew thoughtful. "But it isn't going to be easy. I guess you still have trouble believing it, but I can't just walk into a sales conference and say, 'See here, I've got wind of a product that's the greatest boon to humanity since fire and the wheel,' and expect them to fall all over me. We need a good promotion angle."

"There's got to be some way."

"Keep your shirt on. I'll find one. I haven't been in the business for twenty years for nothing. But one thing anyway. Until this deal is swung, keep your witch's brew



away from me!"

The convincer came, after all, from an idea I had. But it was O'Brien who saw the possibilities and, by dint of massive doses of double-talk and cajolery, arranged for a test survey of a hundred volunteer subjects. These human guinea pigs were furnished gratis with a thirty days' supply of a new toothpaste—a standard base, plus Grandma's lie soap—and, when the time was up, were quizzed as to their reactions to the experiment.

Almost without exception, they professed themselves well pleased. Of course, that was what the sales department wanted to hear about—satisfied customers.

As to *why* our subjects felt better after trying a new dentifrice, they couldn't say because they didn't know. It was merely that their outlook on life seemed to have become sunnier, and their personal relations more agreeable—apart from a few unfortunate domestic upsets, about which, however, the victims themselves seemed remarkably cheerful.

I thought I knew why. My pet theory was working out. Though I was no psychologist, I'd always been sure that a lot of people's mental difficulties and prevailing unhappiness was due solely to their inveterate habit of deceiving themselves. But these people who'd tried Grandma's lie soap couldn't even lie to themselves any more.

This outcome made our brave new world look braver in prospect—as well as likelier. A couple of days later the company's directors made the decision to go into production; and it was rumored that another of the biggest firms was already dickering for a look at the formula.

We had no trouble with the Bureau of Standards. After all, we only had to satisfy them that the stuff was harmless. Presumably they tried it on mice . . .

To celebrate the directors' decision, I invited Alice and her new fiancé to dinner. I was rather vague about what we were celebrating, so that they left no wiser than when they came. But they were much more candid, since I had a supply of the little white tablets on hand.

I gave the leaven most of the evening to work, and at eleven o'clock called Alice's apartment. I'd timed it cor-



rectly. She was in. In tears, too—judging by her voice.

“You and he must have said some pretty nasty things to each other,” I remarked sympathetically. “Too bad about the engagement.”

“Oh, it was *awful!* He said—he *admitted* that if it weren’t for my b-bosom— And I told him—oh, how could I say *that?* But Oliver, how did you know?”

“I saw it coming. And now you’re home all alone, and sort of wishing I was there to console you . . . aren’t you?”

There was one of those pauses I’d learned to recognize. Then she said strangledly, “Y-Yes. I was. I am. But *Oliver*—people don’t—”

“Sometimes they do,” I said. “Hold on. I’ll be right up.”

When a woman has once told the truth to a man, either everything is over between them, or everything has just begun.

From then on the story is mostly history.

Gorley and Gorley’s new improved toothpaste with Verolin began outselling all other brands. Other companies saw that the new ingredient—for reasons nobody quite understood—was becoming more indispensable than chlorophyll had been somewhat earlier, and paid through the nose for the right to use it. G and G added a Verolin mouthwash to their line, and it was also a snowballing success. All the time, of course, Verolin was really Grandma’s lie soap.

These products blanketed the country and went into the export market. They went all over civilization, if you define civilization as those regions of the Earth where people use toothbrushes and seek to avoid halitosis—or, anyway, all over what was then called “the free world” by its inhabitants and “the enslaved world” by the publicists of the “free world” on the other side.

The returns began coming in.

A well-known radio news commentator paused for a refreshing gargle in the mid-break of his program, was unable to continue broadcasting, and resigned the same day.

Various other commentators and newspaper columnists suffered more or less similar fates, while a good many news-



papers and periodicals underwent violent shifts of editorial policy.

Half a dozen magazines having the word "True" in their titles suspended publication.

Quite a few authors, including some more than usually successful ones, abandoned their profession. Surprisingly, those who quit included some who had been praised by the critics for the stark realism of their work, and among those who did not quit were some whose writings were regarded as sheer imaginative flights.

As for the critics, most of them took up useful trades.

A number of university professors conscientiously resigned, stating that they could not teach "facts" which they did not know to be true.

Several hitherto popular and, to their founders, profitable religious cults abruptly disintegrated. In one case there was a riot, when the Prophet of the Luminous Truth appeared in a mass meeting and told his followers some home truths about himself, his doctrines, and themselves.

Most of the churches lost grievously in membership, though at the same time they enjoyed an accession of new converts. Those whose rites included confession complained that, somehow, the act appeared to be losing its deep significance.

Psychoanalysts at first rejoiced over their sudden wholesale success in overcoming their patients' "resistances," and a little later were appalled by their empty waiting rooms.

The divorce rate skyrocketed, then plunged to a permanent record low. Conversely, the marriage rate at first fell off sharply, then climbed gradually back to normal. The birth rate was unaffected.

Innumerable lawyers took down their shingles.

Congressional investigating committees enjoyed a field day, but fell prey to an increasing nervous frustration as witness after witness refused to perjure himself.

In Washington, D. C., a conservatively dressed gentleman checked into a hotel, came down to the lobby after brushing his teeth, and in response to a commercial traveler's casual question said, "My business? Well, I'm a secret agent



for the Soviet Union. And you?"

Police in scores of cities were swamped by confessions of offenses ranging from multiple murder to double parking, and were bewildered by the absence of the expected percentage of false confessions.

For the first time in modern history, the number of homicides exceeded the number of suicides. In general, crimes of stealth virtually ceased to occur, while crimes of violence continued at about their previous level and reported cases of rape declined spectacularly.

Numerous government officials admitted themselves guilty of peculation and malfeasance in office. The business bureaucracy was even harder hit. Among the casualties was a prominent board member of Gorley and Gorley.

To my particular satisfaction, the mayor our local machine had elected made a public speech—apparently unaware that he was doing anything out of the way—in which he thanked by name the boys who had purchased the most votes for him in the last campaign, also those who had put in the strong-arm work.

All the F.B.I. agents doing undercover work in the Communist Party were exposed, and as a result the party went bankrupt for lack of dues-paying members.

As O'Brien had predicted, the advertising business collapsed, burying many lesser enterprises under the ruins. But somehow no general financial panic took place.

A man from Texas was heard to confess that he sometimes got tired of hearing about Texas, and even admitted it couldn't be twice as large as the rest of the United States.

Events such as these were the convulsions, the death throes of an old world and the birth pangs of a new.

Their final phase was the breakdown of the international situation, which had continued for over a decade in a sort of deadly balance. The balance was destroyed when U. S. and other Western diplomats adopted a new tack which provoked, in their Eastern-bloc opponents, reactions first of suspicious alarm, then of bafflement, and finally of a dazed conviction that the spirit of Marxian history had at long last delivered the enemy into their hands—which last



impression led directly to their undoing.

Forgetting the chiseler's basic precept—you can't cheat an honest man—they set about exploiting the situation by extracting from the West all the technical information they coveted, and which was now theirs for the asking. Along with plutonium refinement methods and guided missile designs, they obtained, naturally, the formula for Grandma's lie soap, alias Verolin.

The counterparts of Gorley and Gorley's sales department, in their government-run industries, were also shrewdly alive to the importance of having satisfied customers. Clearly, they reasoned, studying our records, this is a good thing, this is a valuable bit of *kul'tura* . . .

From there on developments followed pretty much the pattern already established in the West. The Iron Curtain sagged, fell apart, and sank into oblivion.

Grandma's lie soap had conquered the world.

Since I retired, I've been using my leisure in exploration and observation of this world which I did a good deal to create, this world which differs so much from the one I grew up in and can remember better than most others even of my own generation. They've had the treatment, and they've changed. But I still brush my teeth with a salt-and-soda mixture.

In many ways, the present era answers to the visions that were called Utopian when I was a boy—called that, usually, with a sneer. A lot of the social and political reforms we only dreamed about then have been carried out as a matter of course, which was inevitable once people stopped lying themselves and one another black in the face.

Mental diseases, tangled lives, crime have all been swept away—not to mention the threat of war that was the Great Shadow overlying all the lesser shadows of the old world.

An election campaign now is carried on in an atmosphere of sobriety and statesmanship that would have given an old-time politician the creeps. None of the old bandstand, circus stuff . . . Speaking of that, one thing I miss is the circus. I used to like to listen to the sideshow barkers—an extinct



tribe. I know, they still have circuses, or call them that; but P. T. Barnum would disown them.

But . . . people look one another in the eyes much more than they ever used to. They don't seem afraid. There's confidence—not the ballooning confidence that led to big economic booms and bigger busts, but a trust resting on solid foundations.

Still, sometimes I wonder.

Not long ago I ran into O'Brien, for the first time in years, in a bar. People don't drink as much as they did, but O'Brien had been drinking a good deal.

"How are you?" I said automatically, the sight of such a long-remembered face making me forget that that particular greeting wasn't used nowadays.

He began a detailed description of his general state of health and present state of intoxication. "Oh," I said. "You've had it."

"Yeah," said O'Brien. "I broke down and took the treatment. I got like everybody else. I couldn't stand the temptation any more. You know what I mean?"

I knew exactly what he meant. For him, with his background, it must have been much worse.

"Maybe," said O'Brien thickly, "I could have been dictator of the world if I'd wanted. But this way's better." He signaled the waiter, then looked at me curiously. "You—not yet?"

"Not yet," I said. "Maybe never. I like to watch things."

"Watch the sheep run," mumbled O'Brien. "All sheep . . ."

He was drunk, but he'd had Grandma's lie soap, and he spoke the truth.

Perhaps there's too much confidence.

Once in a while I yield a little to that temptation O'Brien mentioned, but always in harmless ways, merely for amusement or out of curiosity to see just how much people *will* swallow. Like in that fabrication of Howling Wolf, the genius of the North Woods, which I told you about in the beginning. More and more I find that they'll believe almost



anything, especially the younger generation. Older people still have a residuum of skepticism.

Now it's plain—using hindsight—that we should easily have foreseen the secondary effect. But it developed very slowly. No physiological effect, this, but a psychological one—or simply logical. Once people stop lying, they'll also stop suspecting deceit. They'll believe as they expect to be believed. Little by little, particularly as the young ones who don't remember grow up, they'll become totally—gullible, it used to be called.

A while back, down South, there was an unwashed prophet who made converts right and left to a weird sect of his own devising—until somebody seduced him into heathenish ways, and he tried brushing his teeth. But incidents like that don't really disturb me. As the example shows, they all come out in the wash.

Yet there is something that bothers me. Back before Grandma's lie soap, we used to get sporadic reports of "mysterious airships," "flying saucers," or similarly named equivalents for unexplained objects in the sky. We laughed them off, mostly, because people were always starting crazy rumors. . . . After the great change, those reports might have been expected to stop coming.

But they didn't.

And more recently there have been some queer phenomena noted by the space station and the bubbles on the Moon.

So suppose we're not alone in the Universe or even in the Solar System? And suppose that whoever is out there—circling us, observing us with immense caution for so long—are beings like *we* used to be—fierce, wary, enormously suspicious as their behavior suggests, capable of any falsehood, any treachery?

Wolves, circling the sheep . . .

Perhaps it's all my imagination. I can't be sure. There's only one way I can be sure even of what I think myself.

Pretty soon now I'll go into the bathroom and wash my mouth with Grandma's lie soap. Then I'll look into the mirror and ask myself, face to face, with no possibility of deception: *Did I do right?*



## COMPOUNDED INTEREST

by Mack Reynolds

Mr. Reynolds is an elusive man. I met him once in Chicago, on his way from New Mexico to Florida. A letter to his Florida address, some months after, followed him to Mexico, and I received a reply from Algiers. My queries about the Foreign Legion elicited an explanation (from Tangiers) about pretty girls, the Casbah, and his lifelong ambitions.

To the best of my knowledge, Reynolds does not possess a time machine, and uses only orthodox methods of travel.

THE STRANGER SAID in miserable Italian, "I wish to see Sior Marin Goldini on business."

The concierge's manner was suspicious. Through the wicket he ran his eyes over the newcomer's clothing. "On business, Sior?" He hesitated. "Possibly, Sior, you could inform me as to the nature of your business, so that I might inform his *Zelenza's* secretary, Vico Letta . . ." He let his sentence dribble away.

The stranger thought about that. "It pertains," he said finally, "to gold." He brought a hand from his pocket and opened it to disclose a half dozen yellow coins.

"A moment, *Lustrissimo*," the servant blurted quickly. "Forgive me. Your costume, *Lustrissimo* . . ." He let his sentence dribble away again and was gone.

A few moments later he returned to swing the door open wide. "If you please, *Lustrissimo*, his *Zelenza* awaits you."

He led the way down a vaulted hall to the central court, to the left past a fountain well to a heavy outer staircase supported by Gothic arches and sided by a carved parapet.



They mounted, turned through a dark doorway and into a poorly lit corridor. The servant stopped and drummed carefully on a thick wooden door. A voice murmured from within and the servant held the door open and then retreated.

Two men were at a rough-hewn oak table. The older was heavy-set, tight of face and cold, and the other tall and thin and ever at ease. The latter bowed gently. He gestured and said, "His *Zelenza*, the Sior Marin Goldini."

The stranger attempted a clumsy bow in return, said awkwardly, "My name is . . . Mister Smith."

There was a moment of silence which Goldini broke finally by saying, "And this is my secretary, Vico Letta. The servant mentioned gold, Sior, and business."

The stranger dug into a pocket, came forth with ten coins which he placed on the table before him. Vico Letta picked one up in mild interest and examined it. "I am not familiar with the coinage," he said.

His master twisted his cold face without humor. "Which amazes me, my good Vico." He turned to the newcomer. "And what is your wish with these coins, Sior Mister Smith? I confess, this is confusing."

"I want," Mister Smith said, "to have you invest the sum for me."

Vico Letta had idly weighed one of the coins in question on a small scale. He cast his eyes up briefly as he estimated. "The ten would come to approximately forty-nine zecchini, *Zelenza*," he murmured.

Marin Goldini said impatiently, "Sior, the amount is hardly sufficient for my house to bother with. The book-keeping alone—"

The stranger broke in. "Don't misunderstand. I realize the sum is small. However, I would ask but ten per cent, and would not call for an accounting for . . . for one hundred years."

The two Venetians raised puzzled eyebrows. "A hundred years, Sior? Perhaps your command of our language . . ." Goldini said politely.

"One hundred years," the stranger said.



"But surely," the head of the house of Goldini protested, "it is unlikely that any of we three will be alive. As God desires, possibly even the house of Goldini will be a memory only."

Vico Letta, intrigued, had been calculating rapidly. Now he said, "In one hundred years, at ten per cent compounded annually, your gold would be worth better than 700,000 zecchini."

"Quite a bit more," the stranger said firmly.

"A comfortable sum," Goldini nodded, beginning to feel some of the interest of his secretary. "And during this period, all decisions pertaining to the investment of the amount would be in the hands of my house?"

"Exactly." The stranger took a sheet of paper from his pocket, tore it in two, and handed one half to the Venetians. "When my half of this is presented to your descendants, one hundred years from today, the bearer will be due the full amount."

"Done, Sior Mister Smith!" Goldini said. "An amazing transaction, but done. Ten per cent in this day is small indeed to ask."

"It is enough. And now may I make some suggestions? You are perhaps familiar with the Polo family?"

Goldini scowled. "I know Sior Maffeo Polo."

"And his nephew, Marco?"

Goldini said cautiously, "I understand young Marco was captured by the Genoese. Why do you ask?"

"He is writing a book on his adventures in the Orient. It would be a well of information for a merchant house interested in the East. Another thing. In a few years there will be an attempt on the Venetian government and shortly thereafter a Council of Ten will be formed which will eventually become the supreme power of the republic. Support it from the first and make every effort to have your house represented."

They stared at him and Marin Goldini crossed himself unobtrusively.

The stranger said, "If you find need for profitable investments beyond Venice I suggest you consider the merchants



of the Hanse cities and their soon to be organized League."

They continued to stare and he said, uncomfortably, "I'll go now. Your time is valuable." He went to the door, opened it himself and left.

Marin Goldini snorted. "That liar, Marco Polo."

Vico said sourly, "How could he have known we were considering expanding our activities into the East? We have discussed it only between ourselves."

"The attempt on the government," Marin Goldini said, crossing himself again. "Was he hinting that our intriguing is known? Vico, perhaps we should disassociate ourselves from the conspirators."

"Perhaps you are right, *Zelenza*," Vico muttered. He picked up one of the coins again and examined it, back and front. "There is no such nation," he grumbled, "but the coin is perfectly minted." He picked up the torn sheet of paper, held it to the light. "Nor have I ever seen such paper, *Zelenza*, nor such a strange language, although, on closer examination, it appears to have some similarities to the English tongue."

The House of Letta-Goldini was located now in the San Toma district, an imposing structure through which passed the proceeds of a thousand ventures in a hundred lands.

Riccardo Letta looked up from his desk at his assistant. "Then he really has appeared? *Per favore*, Lio, bring me the papers pertaining to the, ah, account. Allow me a matter of ten minutes to refresh my memory and then bring the Sior to me." . . .

The great grandson of Vico Letta, head of the House of Letta-Goldini, came to his feet elegantly, bowed in the sweeping style of his day, said, "Your servant, Sior . . ."

The newcomer bobbed his head in a jerky, embarrassed return of the courtesy, said, "Mister Smith."

"A chair, *Lustrissimo*? And now, pray pardon my abruptness. One's duties when responsible for a house of the magnitude of Letta-Goldini . . ."

Mister Smith held out a torn sheet of paper. His Italian was abominable. "The agreement made with Marin Goldini,



exactly one century ago."

Riccardo Letta took the paper. It was new, clean and fresh, which brought a frown to his high forehead. He took up an aged, yellowed fragment from before him and placed one against the other. They matched to perfection. "Amazing, Sior, but how can it be that my piece is yellow with age and your own so fresh?"

Mister Smith cleared his throat. "Undoubtedly, different methods have been used to preserve them."

"Undoubtedly." Letta relaxed in his chair, placed fingertips together. "And undoubtedly you wish your capital and the interest it has accrued. The amount is a sizable one, Sior; we shall find it necessary to call in various accounts."

Mister Smith shook his head. "I want to continue on the original basis."

Letta sat upright. "You mean for another hundred years?"

"Precisely. I have faith in your management, Sior Letta."

"I see." Riccardo Letta had not maintained his position in the cutthroat world of Venetian banking and commerce by other than his own ability. It took him only a moment to gather himself. "The appearance of your ancestor, Sior, has given rise to a veritable legend in this house. You are familiar with the details?"

The other nodded, warily.

"He made several suggestions, among them that we support the Council of Ten. We are now represented on the Council, Sior. I need not point out the advantage. He also suggested we investigate the travels of Marco Polo, which we failed to do—but should have. Above all in strangeness was his recommendation that investments be made in the Hanse towns."

"Well, and wasn't that a reasonable suggestion?"

"Profitable, Sior, but hardly reasonable. Your ancestor appeared in the year 1300 but the Hanseatic League wasn't formed until 1358."

The small man, strangely garbed in much the same manner tradition had it the first Mister Smith had appeared, twisted his face wryly. "I am afraid I am in no position to explain, Sior. And now, my own time is limited, and, in



view of the present size of my investment, I am going to request you have drawn up a contract more binding than the largely verbal one made with the founders of your house."

Riccardo Letta rang a small bell on his desk and the next hour was spent with assistants and secretaries. At the end of that period, Mister Smith, a sheaf of documents in his hands, said, "And now may I make a few suggestions?"

Riccardo Letta leaned forward, his eyes narrow. "By all means."

"Your house will continue to grow and you will have to think in terms of spreading to other nations. Continue to back the Hanse cities. In the not too far future a remarkable man named Jacques Coeur will become prominent in France. Bring him into the firm as French representative. However, all support should be withdrawn from him in the year 1450."

Mister Smith stood up, preparatory to leaving. "One warning, Sior Letta. As a fortune grows large, the jackals gather. I suggest the magnitude of this one be hidden and diffused. In this manner temporary setbacks may be suffered through the actions of this prince, or that revolution, but the fortune will continue."

Riccardo Letta was not an overly religious man, but after the other had left he crossed himself as had his predecessor.

There were twenty of them waiting in the year 1500. They sat about a handsome conference table, representatives of half a dozen nations, arrogant of mien, sometimes cruel of face. Waldemar Gotland acted as chairman.

"Your Excellency," he said in passable English, "may we assume this is your native language?"

Mister Smith was taken aback by the number of them, but, "You may," he said.

"And that you wish to be addressed as Mister Smith in the English fashion?"

Smith nodded. "That will be acceptable."

"Then, sir, if you will, your papers. We have named a committee, headed by Emil de Hanse, to examine them as to authenticity."



Smith handed over his sheaf of papers. "I desired," he complained, "that this investment be kept secret."

"And it has been to the extent possible, Excellency. Its size is now fantastic. Although the name Letta-Goldini is still kept, no members of either family still survive. During the past century, Excellency, numerous attempts have been made to seize your fortune."

"To be expected," Mister Smith said interestedly. "And what foiled them?"

"Principally the number involved in its management, Excellency. As a representative from Scandinavia, it is hardly to my interest to see a Venetian or German corrupt The Contract."

Antonio Ruzzini bit out, "Nor to our interest to see Waldemar Gotland attempt it. There has been blood shed more than once in the past century, *Zelenza*."

The papers were accepted as authentic.

Gotland cleared his throat. "We have reached the point, Excellency, where the entire fortune is yours, and we merely employees. As we have said, attempts have been made on the fortune. We suggest, if it is your desire to continue its growth . . ."

Mister Smith nodded here.

". . . that a stronger contract, which we have taken the liberty to draw up, be adopted."

"Very well, I'll look into it. But first, let me give you my instructions."

There was an intake of breath and they sat back in their chairs.

Mister Smith said, "With the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, Venetian power will drop. The house must make its center elsewhere."

There was a muffled exclamation.

Mister Smith went on: "The fortune is now considerable enough that we can afford to take a long view. We must turn our eyes westward. Send a representative of the fortune to Spain. Shortly, the discoveries in the west will open up investment opportunities there. Support men named Hernando Cortez and Francisco Pizarro. In the middle of the



century withdraw our investments from Spain and enter them in England, particularly in commerce and manufacture. There will be large land grants in the new world; attempt to have representatives of the fortune gain some of them. There will be confusion at the death of Henry VIII; support his daughter Elizabeth.

"You will find, as industry expands in the northern countries, that it is impractical for a manufacturer to operate where there are literally scores of saints' days and fiestas. Support such religious leaders as demand a more, ah, puritanical way of life."

He wound it up. "One other thing. This group is too large. I suggest that only one person from each nation involved be admitted to the secret of the contract."

"Gentlemen," Mister Smith said in 1600, "turn more to manufacture and commerce in Europe, to agriculture, mining and accumulation of large areas of real estate in the New World. Great fortunes will be made this century in the East; be sure that our various houses are first to profit."

They waited about the conference table in London. The clock, periodically and nervously checked, told them they had a full fifteen minutes before Mister Smith was expected.

Sir Robert took a pinch of snuff, presented an air of nonchalance he did not feel. "Gentlemen," he said, "frankly I find it difficult to believe the story legend. Come now, after everything has been said, what does it boil down to?"

Pierre Deflage said softly, "It is a beautiful story, *messieurs*. In the year 1300 a somewhat bedraggled stranger appeared before a Venetian banking house and invested ten pieces of gold, the account to continue for a century. He made certain suggestions that would have tried the abilities of Nostradamus. Since then his descendants have appeared each century at this day and hour and reinvested the amount, never collecting a *sou* for their own use, but always making further suggestions. Until now, *messieurs*, we have reached the point where it is by far the largest fortune in the world. I, for instance, am considered the wealthiest man in France."



He shrugged eloquently. "While we all know I am but an employee of The Contract."

"I submit," Sir Robert said, "that the story is impossible. It has been one hundred years since our *Mr. Smith* has supposedly appeared. During that period there have been ambitious men and unscrupulous men in charge of The Contract. They concocted this fantastic tale for their own ends. Gentlemen, there is no Mr. Smith and never was a Mr. Smith. The question becomes, shall we continue the farce, or shall we take measures to divide the fortune and each go our own way?"

A small voice from the doorway said, "If you think that possible, sir, we shall have to work still more to make the contract iron bound. May I introduce myself? You may call me Mr. Smith."

In 1800 he said, "You are to back, for twelve years, the adventurer Bonaparte. In 1812 drop him. You are to invest largely in the new nation, the United States. Send a representative to New York immediately. This is to be a century of revolution and change. Withdraw support from monarchy . . ." There was a gasp from around the table. ". . . and support the commercial classes. Back a certain Robert Clive in India. Withdraw all support of Spain in Latin America. In the American civil war to come, back the North.

"Largely, gentlemen, this is to be the century of England. Remember that." He looked away for a moment, off into an unknown distance. "Next century will be different, but not even I know what lies beyond its middle."

After he was gone, Amschel Mayer, representative from Vienna, murmured, "Colleagues, have you realized that at last one of The Contract relicts makes sense?"

Lord Windermere scowled at him, making small attempt to disguise his anti-semitism. "What'd'ya mean by that, sir?"

The international banker opened the heavy box which contained the documents handed down since the day of Goldini. He emerged with a medium-sized gold coin. "One of the original invested coins has been retained all these centuries, my lord."



Windermere took it and read. "The United States of America. Why, confound it, man, this is ridiculous. Someone has been a-pranking. The coin couldn't have existed in Goldini's day; the colonies proclaimed their independence less than twenty-five years ago."

Amschel Mayer murmured, "And the number at the bottom of the coin. I wonder if anyone has ever considered that it might be a date."

Windermere stared at the coin again. "A date? Don't be an ass! One does not date a coin more than a century ahead of time."

Mayer rubbed his beardless face with a thoughtful hand. "More than six centuries ahead of time, my lord."

Over cigars and brandy they went into the question in detail. Young Warren Piedmont said, "You gentlemen have the advantage of me. Until two years ago I knew only vaguely of The Contract in spite of my prominence in the American branch of the hierarchy. And, unfortunately, I was not present when Mr. Smith appeared in 1900 as were the rest of you."

"You didn't miss a great deal," Von Borman growled. "Our Mr. Smith, who has all of us tied so tightly with The Contract that everything we own, even to this cigar I hold in my hand, is his—our Mr. Smith is insignificant, all but threadbare."

"Then there actually is such a person," Piedmont said.

Albert Marat, the French representative, snorted expressively. "Amazingly enough, *messieurs*, his description, even to his clothes, is exactly that handed down from Goldini's day." He chuckled. "We have one advantage this time."

Piedmont frowned. "Advantage?"

"Unbeknown to Mr. Smith, we took a photo of him when he appeared in 1900. It will be interesting to compare it with his next appearance."

Warren Piedmont continued to frown his lack of understanding and Hideka Mitsuki explained. "You have not read the novels of the so clever Mr. H. G. Wells?"

"Never heard of him."



Smith-Winston, of the British branch, said, "To sum it up, Piedmont, we have discussed the possibility that our Mr. Smith is a time traveler."

"Time traveler! What in the world do you mean?"

"This is the year 1910. In the past century science has made strides beyond the conception of the most advanced scholars of 1810. What strides will be made in the next fifty years, we can only conjecture. That they will even embrace travel in time is mind-twisting for us, but not impossible."

"Why fifty years? It will be a full century before—"

"No. This time Mr. Smith informed us that he is not to wait until the year 2000 for his visit. He is scheduled for July 16, 1960. At that time, friends, I am of the opinion that we shall find what our Mr. Smith has in mind to do with the greatest fortune the world has ever seen."

Von Borman looked about him and growled, "Has it occurred to you that we eight men are the only persons in the world who even know The Contract exists?" He touched his chest. "In Germany, not even the Kaiser knows that I directly own—in the name of The Contract, of course—or control possibly two thirds of the corporate wealth of the Reich."

Marat said, "And has it occurred to you that all our Monsieur Smith need do is demand his wealth and we are penniless?"

Smith-Winston chuckled bitterly. "If you are thinking in terms of attempting to do something about it, forget it. For half a millennium the best legal brains of the world have been strengthening The Contract. Wars have been fought over attempts to change it. Never openly, of course. Those who died did so of religion, national destiny, or national honor. . . . But never has the attempt succeeded. The Contract goes on."

Piedmont said, "To get back to this 1960 appearance. Why do you think Smith will reveal his purpose, if this fantastic belief of yours is correct, that he is a time traveler?"

"It all fits in, old man," Smith-Winston told him. "Since Goldini's time he has been turning up in clothing not too dissimilar to what we wear today. He speaks English—with an American accent. The coins he first gave Goldini were



American double-eagles minted in this century. Sum it up. Our Mr. Smith desired to create an enormous fortune. He has done so and I believe that in 1960 we shall learn his purpose."

He sighed and went back to his cigar. "I am afraid I shall not see it. Fifty years is a long time."

They left the subject finally and went to another almost as close to their hearts. Von Borman growled, "I contend that if The Contract is to be served, Germany needs a greater place in the sun. I intend to construct a Berlin to Baghdad railroad and to milk the East of its treasures."

Marat and Smith-Winston received his words coldly. "I assure you, monsieur," Marat said, "we shall have to resist any such plans on your part. The Contract can best be served by maintaining the status quo; there is no room for German expansion. If you persist in this, it will mean war and you recall what Mr. Smith prophesied. In case of war, we are to withdraw support from Germany and, for some reason, Russia, and support the allies. We warn you, Borman."

"This time Mr. Smith was wrong," Borman growled. "As he said, oil is to be invested in above all, and how can Germany secure oil without access to the East? My plans will succeed and the cause of The Contract will thus be forwarded."

The quiet Hideka Mitsuki murmured, "When Mr. Smith first invested his pieces of gold I wonder if he realized the day would come when the different branches of his fortune would plan and carry out international conflicts in the name of The Contract?"

There were only six of them gathered around the circular table in the Empire State suite when he entered. None had been present at his last appearance and of them all only Warren Piedmont had ever met and conversed with anyone who had actually seen Mr. Smith. Now the octogenarian held up an aged photograph and compared it to the newcomer. "Yes," he muttered, "they were right."

Mr. Smith handed over an envelope heavy with paper. "Don't you wish to check these?"



Piedmont looked about the table. Besides himself, there was John Smith-Winston, the second, from England; Rami Mardu, from India; Warner Voss-Richer, of West Germany; Mito Fisuki, of Japan; Juan Santos, representing Italy, France and Spain. Piedmont said, "We have here a photo taken of you in 1900, sir; it is hardly necessary to identify you further. I might add, however, that during the past ten years we have had various celebrated scientists at work on the question of whether or not time travel was possible."

Mr. Smith said, "So I have realized. In short, you have spent my money in investigating me."

There was little of apology in Piedmont's voice. "We have faithfully, some of us for all our adult lives, protected The Contract. I will not deny that the pay is the highest in the world; however it is only a *job*. Part of the job consists of protecting The Contract and your interests from those who would fraudulently appropriate the fortune. We spend millions every year in conducting investigations."

"You're right, of course. But your investigations into the possibilities of time travel . . . ?"

"Invariably the answer was that it was impossible. Only one physicist offered a glimmer of possibility."

"Ah, and who was that?"

"A Professor Alan Shirey who does his research at one of the California universities. We were careful, of course, not to hire his services directly. When first approached he admitted he had never considered the problem but he became quite intrigued. However, he finally stated his opinion that the only solution would involve the expenditure of an amount of power so great that there was no such quantity available."

"I see," Mr. Smith said wryly. "And following this period for which you hired the professor, did he discontinue his investigations into time travel?"

Piedmont made a vague gesture. "How would I know?"

John Smith-Winston interrupted stiffly. "Sir, we have all drawn up complete accountings of your property. To say it is vast is an understatement beyond even an Englishman. We should like instructions on how you wish us to continue."



Mr. Smith looked at him. "I wish to begin immediate steps to liquidate."

"Liquidate!" six voices ejaculated.

"I want cash, gentlemen," Smith said definitely. "As fast as it can be accomplished, I want my property converted into cash."

Warner Voss-Richer said harshly, "Mr. Smith, there isn't enough coinage in the world to buy your properties."

"There is no need for there to be. I will be spending it as rapidly as you can convert my holdings into gold or its credit equivalent. The money will be put back into circulation over and over again."

Piedmont was aghast. "But *why*?" He held his hands up in dismay. "Can't you realize the repercussions of such a move? Mr. Smith, you must explain the purpose of all this. . . ."

Mr. Smith said, "The purpose should be obvious. And the pseudonym of Mr. Smith is no longer necessary. You may call me Shirey—Professor Alan Shirey. You see, gentlemen, the question with which you presented me, whether or not time travel was possible, became consumingly interesting. I have finally solved, I believe, all the problems involved. I need now only a fantastic amount of power to activate my device. Given such an amount of power, somewhat more than is at present produced on the entire globe, I believe I shall be able to travel in time."

"But, but *why*? All this, all this . . . Cartels, governments, wars . . ." Warren Piedmont's aged voice wavered, faltered.

Mr. Smith—Professor Alan Shirey—looked at him strangely. "Why, so that I may travel back to early Venice where I shall be able to make the preliminary steps necessary for me to secure sufficient funds to purchase such an enormous amount of power output."

"And six centuries of human history," said Rami Mardu, Asiatic representative, so softly as hardly to be heard. "Its meaning is no more than this . . . ?"

Professor Shirey looked at him impatiently.

"Do I understand you to contend, sir, that there have been other centuries of human history with more meaning?"



## PRIMA BELLADONNA

by J. G. Ballard

This year "S-F" covers the s-front, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Fifteen short stories, one verse parody of one novella, one satire and one article about too many movies bring you a pretty complete (and surprisingly proportionate) representation of the science-fantasy scene here and abroad. One story from Wales, via Canada; plus the peripatetic Mack Reynolds; together with Shanghai-born Ballard's story from a British magazine, combine, I feel, to offer an appropriately international flavor.

This is Mr. Ballard's first published science-fiction, and contains one of the very few entirely *new* s-f ideas of the last few years.

I FIRST MET JANE CIRACYLIDES during the Recess, that world slump of boredom, lethargy and high summer which carried us all so blissfully through ten unforgettable years, and I suppose that may have had a lot to do with what went on between us. Certainly I can't believe I could make myself as ridiculous now, but then again, it might have been just Jane herself.

Whatever else they said about her, everyone had to agree she was a beautiful girl, even if her genetic background was a little mixed. The gossips at Vermillion Sands soon decided there was a good deal of mutant in her, because she had a rich patina-golden skin and what looked like insects for eyes, but that didn't bother either myself or any of my friends, one or two of whom, like Tony Miles and Harry Devine, have never since been quite the same to their wives.

We spent most of our time in those days on the wide cool



balcony of my apartment off Beach Drive, drinking beer—we always kept a useful supply stacked in the refrigerator of my music shop on the street level—yarning in a desultory way and playing i-Go, a sort of decelerated chess which was popular then. None of the others ever did any work; Harry was an architect and Tony Miles sometimes sold a few ceramics to the tourists, but I usually put a couple of hours in at the shop each morning, getting off the foreign orders and turning the beer.

One particularly hot lazy day I'd just finished wrapping up a delicate soprano mimosa wanted by the Hamburg Oratorio Society when Harry phoned down from the balcony.

"Parker's Choro-Flora?" he said. "You're guilty of over-production. Come on up here. Tony and I have something beautiful to show you."

When I went up I found them grinning happily like two dogs who had just discovered an interesting tree.

"Well?" I asked. "Where is it?"

Tony tilted his head slightly. "Over there," he indicated.

I looked up and down the street, and across the face of the apartment house opposite.

"Careful," he warned me. "Don't gape at her."

I slid into one of the wicker chairs and craned my head round cautiously.

"Fourth floor," Harry elaborated slowly, out of the side of his mouth. "One left from the balcony opposite. Happy now?"

"Dreaming," I told him, taking a long slow focus on her. "I wonder what else she can do?"

Harry and Tony sighed thankfully. "Well?" Tony asked.

"She's out of my league," I said. "But you two shouldn't have any trouble. Go over and tell her how much she needs you."

Harry groaned. "Don't you realize, this one is poetic, emergent, something straight out of the primal apocalyptic sea. She's probably divine."

The woman was strolling around the lounge, re-arranging the furniture, wearing almost nothing except a large abstract metallic hat. Even in shadow the long sinuous lines of her



thighs and shoulders gleamed gold and burning. She was a walking galaxy of light. Vermillion Sands had never seen anything like her.

"The approach has got to be equivocal," Harry continued, gazing into his beer. "Shy, almost mystical. Nothing urgent or grabbing."

The woman stooped down to unpack a suitcase and the metal vanes of her hat fluttered over her face. I didn't bother to remind Harry that Betty, his wife and a girl of considerable spirit, would have firmly restrained him from anything that wasn't mystical.

"She must use up about a kilowatt," I calculated. "What do you think her chemistry is?"

"Who cares," Harry said. "It doesn't matter to me if it's siliconic."

"In this heat?" I said. "She'd ignite."

The woman walked out onto the balcony, saw us staring at her, looked around for a moment and then went in again.

We sat back and looked thoughtfully at each other, like three triumvirs deciding how to divide an empire, not saying too much, and one eye watching for any chance of a double-deal.

Five minutes later the singing started.

At first I thought it was one of the azalea trios in trouble with an alkaline pH, but the frequencies were too high. They were almost out of the audible range, a thin tremolo quaver which came out of nowhere and rose up the back of the skull.

Harry and Tony frowned at me.

"Your livestock's unhappy about something," Tony told me. "Can you quieten it down?"

"It's not the plants," I told him. "Can't be."

The sound mounted in intensity, scraping the edge off my occipital bones. I was about to go down to the shop when Harry and Tony leaped out of their chairs and dived back against the wall.

"For chrissake, Steve, look out!" Tony yelled at me. He pointed wildly at the table I was leaning on, picked up a chair and smashed it down on the glass top.

I stood up and brushed the fragments out of my hair.



"What the hell's the matter?" I asked them.

Tony was looking down at the tangle of wickerwork tied round the metal struts of the table. Harry came forward and took my arm gingerly.

"That was close. You all right?"

"It's gone," Tony said flatly. He looked carefully over the balcony floor and down over the rail into the street.

"What was it?" I asked.

Harry peered at me closely. "Didn't you see it? It was about three inches from you. Emperor Scorpion, big as a lobster." He sat down weakly on a beer crate. "Must have been a sonic one. The noise has gone now."

After they'd left I cleared up the mess and had a quiet beer to myself. I could have sworn nothing had got onto the table.

On the balcony opposite, wearing a gown of shimmering ionized fiber, the golden woman was watching me.

I found out who she was the next morning. Tony and Harry were down at the beach with their wives, probably enlarging on the scorpion, and I was in the shop tuning up a Khan-Arachnid orchid with the UV lamp. It was a difficult bloom, with a normal full range of twenty-four octaves, but like all the tetracot  $K_3 + 25 C_5 A_9$  chorotropes, unless it got a lot of exercise it tended to relapse into neurotic minor key transpositions which were the devil to break. And as the senior bloom in the shop it naturally affected all the others. Invariably when I opened the shop in the mornings it sounded like a madhouse, but as soon as I'd fed the Arachnid and straightened out one of two pH gradients the rest promptly took their cues from it and dimmed down quietly in their control tanks, two-time, three-four, the multi-tones, all in perfect harmony.

There were only about a dozen true Arachnids in captivity; most of the others were either mutes or grafts from dicot stems, and I was lucky to have mine at all. I'd bought the place five years earlier from an old half-deaf man called Sayers, and the day before he left he moved a lot of rogue stock out to the garbage disposal scoop behind the apart-



ment block. Reclaiming some of the tanks, I'd come across the Arachnid, thriving on a diet of algae and perished rubber tubing.

Why Sayers had wanted to throw it away I'd never discovered. Before he came to Vermillion Sands he'd been a curator at the old Kew Conservatoire where the first choroflora had been bred, and had worked under the Director, Dr. Mandel, who as a young botanist of twenty-five had discovered the prime Arachnid in the Guiana forest. The orchid took its name from the Khan-Arachnid spider which pollinated the flower, simultaneously laying its own eggs in the fleshy ovule, guided, or as Mandel always insisted, actually mesmerized to it by the vibrations which the orchid's calyx emitted at pollination-time. The first Arachnid orchids beamed out only a few random frequencies, but by cross-breeding and maintaining them artificially at the pollination stage Mandel had produced a strain that spanned a maximum of twenty-four octaves.

Not that he's ever been able to hear them. At the climax of his life's work Mandel, like Beethoven, was stone deaf, but apparently by merely looking at a blossom he could listen to its music. Strangely, though, after he went deaf he never looked at an Arachnid.

That morning I could almost understand why. The orchid was in a vicious mood. First it refused to feed, and I had to coax it along in a fluoroldehyde flush, and then it started going ultra-sonic, which meant complaints from all the dog owners in the area. Finally it tried to fracture the tank by resonating.

The whole place was in uproar, and I was almost resigned to shutting them down and waking them all by hand individually—a back-breaking job with eighty tanks in the shop—when everything suddenly died away to a murmur.

I looked round and saw the golden-skinned woman walk in.

“Good morning,” I said. “They must like you.”

She laughed pleasantly. “Hello. Weren't they behaving?”

Under the black beach robe her skin was a softer, more mellow gold, and it was her eyes that held me. I could just see



them under the wide-brimmed hat. Insect legs wavered delicately round two points of purple light.

She walked over to a bank of mixed ferns and stood looking at them, her ample hips cocked to one side.

The ferns reached out toward her and trebled eagerly in their liquid fluted voices.

"Aren't they sweet?" she said, stroking the fronds gently. "They need so much affection."

Her voice was low in the register, a breath of cool sand pouring, with a lilt that gave it music.

"I've just come to Vermillion Sands," she said, "and my apartment seems awfully quiet. Perhaps if I had a flower, one would be enough, I shouldn't feel so lonely."

I couldn't take my eyes off her.

"Yes," I agreed, brisk and business-like. "What about something colorful? This Sumatra Samphire, say? It's a pedigree mezzo-soprano from the same follicle as the Bayreuth Festival Prima Belladonna."

"No," she said. "It looks rather cruel."

"Or this Louisiana Lute Lily? If you thin out its SO<sub>2</sub> it'll play some beautiful madrigals. I'll show you how to do it."

She wasn't listening to me. Slowly her hands raised in front of her breasts so that she almost seemed to be praying; she moved toward the counter on which the Arachnid stood.

"How beautiful it is," she said, gazing at the rich yellow and purple leaves hanging from the scarlet-ribbed vibro-calyx.

I followed her across the floor and switched on the Arachnid's audio so that she could hear it. Immediately the plant came to life. The leaves stiffened and filled with color and the calyx inflated, its ribs sprung tautly. A few sharp disconnected notes spat out.

"Beautiful, but evil," I said.

"Evil?" she repeated. "No, proud." She stepped closer to the orchid and looked down into its huge malevolent head. The Arachnid quivered and the spines on its stem arched and flexed menacingly.

"Careful," I warned her. "It's sensitive to the faintest respiratory sounds."



"Quiet," she said, waving me back. "I think it wants to sing."

"Those are only key fragments," I told her. "It doesn't perform. I use it as a frequency—"

"Listen!" She held my arm and squeezed it tightly.

A low rhythmic fusion of melody had been coming from the plants around the shop, and mounting above them I heard a single stronger voice calling out, at first a thin high-pitched reed of sound that began to pulse and deepen and finally swelled into full baritone, raising the other plants in chorus about itself.

I'd never heard the Arachnid sing before and I was listening to it open-eared when I felt a glow of heat burn against my arm. I turned round and saw the woman staring intently at the plant, her skin aflame, the insects in her eyes writhing insanely. The Arachnid stretched out toward her, calyx erect, leaves like blood-red sabers.

I stepped round her quickly and switched off the argon feed. The Arachnid sank to a whimper, and around us there was a nightmarish babel of broken notes and voices toppling from high C's and L's into discord. Then only a faint whispering of leaves moved over the silence.

The woman gripped the edge of the tank and gathered herself. Her skin dimmed and the insects in her eyes slowed to a delicate wavering.

"Why did you turn it off?" she asked heavily.

"I'm sorry," I said. "But I've got ten thousand dollars worth of stock here and that sort of twelve-tone emotional storm can blow a lot of valves. Most of these plants aren't equipped for grand opera."

She watched the Arachnid as the gas drained out of its calyx, and one by one its leaves buckled and lost their color.

"How much is it?" she asked me, opening her bag.

"It's not for sale," I said. "Frankly I've no idea how it picked up those bars—"

"Will a thousand dollars be enough?" she asked, her eyes fixed on me steadily.

"I can't," I told her. "I'd never be able to tune the others without it. Anyway," I added, trying to smile, "that Arachnid



would be dead in ten minutes if you took it out of its vivarium. All these cylinders and leads would look a little odd inside your lounge."

"Yes, of course," she agreed, suddenly smiling back at me. "I was stupid." She gave the orchid a last backward glance and strolled away across the floor to the long Tchaikovsky section popular with the tourists.

"'Pathetique,'" she read off a label at random. "I'll take this."

I wrapped up the scabia and slipped the instructional booklet into the crate, keeping my eye on her all the time.

"Don't look so alarmed," she said with amusement. "I've never heard anything like that before."

I wasn't alarmed. It was just that thirty years at Vermillion Sands had narrowed my horizons.

"How long are you staying at Vermillion Sands?" I asked.

"I open at the Casino tonight," she said. She told me her name was Jane Ciracylides and that she was a specialty singer.

"Why don't you look in?" she asked, her eyes fluttering mischievously. "I come on at eleven. You may find it interesting."

I did. The next morning Vermillion Sands hummed. Jane created a sensation. After her performance 300 people swore they'd seen everything from a choir of angels taking the vocal in the music of the spheres to Alexander's Ragtime Band. As for myself, perhaps I'd listened to too many flowers, but at least I knew where the scorpion on the balcony had come from.

Tony Miles had heard Sophie Tucker singing the St. Louis Blues, and Harry the elder Bach conducting the B Minor Mass.

They came round to the shop and argued over their respective performances while I wrestled with the flowers.

"Amazing," Tony exclaimed. "How does she do it? Tell me."

"The Heidelberg score," Harry ecstasied. "Sublime, absolute." He looked irritably at the flowers. "Can't you keep



these things quiet? They're making one hell of a row."

They were, and I had a shrewd idea why. The Arachnid was completely out of control, and by the time I'd clamped it down in a weak saline it had blown out over \$300 worth of shrubs.

"The performance at the Casino last night was nothing on the one she gave here yesterday," I told them. "The Ring of the Nibelungs played by Stan Kenton. That Arachnid went insane. I'm sure it wanted to kill her."

Harry watched the plant convulsing its leaves in rigid spasmic movements.

"If you ask me it's in an advanced state of rut. Why should it want to kill her?"

"Not literally. Her voice must have overtones that irritate its calyx. None of the other plants minded. They cooed like turtle doves when she touched them."

Tony shivered happily.

Light dazzled in the street outside.

I handed Tony the broom. "Here, lover, brace yourself on that. Miss Ciracylides is dying to meet you."

Jane came into the shop, wearing a flame yellow cocktail skirt and another of her hats.

I introduced her to Harry and Tony.

"The flowers seem very quiet this morning," she said. "What's the matter with them?"

"I'm cleaning out the tanks," I told her. "By the way, we all want to congratulate you on last night. How does it feel to be able to name your fiftieth city?"

She smiled shyly and sauntered away round the shop. As I knew she would, she stopped by the Arachnid and leveled her eyes at it.

I wanted to see what she'd say, but Harry and Tony were all around her, and soon got her up to my apartment, where they had a hilarious morning playing the fool and raiding my scotch.

"What about coming out with us after the show tonight?" Tony asked her. "We can go dancing at the Flamingo."

"But you're both married," Jane protested coyly. "Aren't you worried about your reputations?"



"Oh, we'll bring the girls," Harry said airily. "And Steve here can come along and hold your coat."

We played i-Go together. Jane said she'd never played the game before, but she had no difficulty picking up the rules, and when she started sweeping the board with us I knew she was cheating. Admittedly it isn't every day that you get a chance to play i-Go with a golden-skinned woman with insects for eyes, but nevertheless I was annoyed. Harry and Tony, of course, didn't mind.

"She's charming," Harry said, after she'd left. "Who cares? It's a stupid game anyway."

"I care," I said. "She cheats."

The next three or four days at the shop were an audio-vegetative armageddon. Jane came in every morning to look at the Arachnid, and her presence was more than the flower could bear. Unfortunately I couldn't starve the plants down below their thresholds. They needed exercise and they had to have the Arachnid to lead them. But instead of running through its harmonic scales the orchid only screeched and whined. It wasn't the noise, which only a couple of dozen people complained about, but the damage being done to their vibratory chords that worried me. Those in the 17th Century catalogues stood up well to the strain, and the moderns were immune, but the Romantics burst their calyxes by the score. By the third day after Jane's arrival I'd lost \$200 worth of Beethoven and more Mendelssohn and Schubert than I could bear to think about.

Jane seemed oblivious to the trouble she was causing me.

"What's wrong with them all?" she asked, surveying the chaos of gas cylinders and drip feeds spread across the floor.

"I don't think they like you," I told her. "At least the Arachnid doesn't. Your voice may move men to strange and wonderful visions, but it throws that orchid into acute melancholia."

"Nonsense," she said, laughing at me. "Give it to me and I'll show you how to look after it."

"Are Tony and Harry keeping you happy?" I asked her. I was annoyed I couldn't go down to the beach with them and



instead had to spend my time draining tanks and titrating up norm solutions, none of which ever worked.

"They're very amusing," she said. "We play i-Go and I sing for them. But I wish you could come out more often."

After another two weeks I had to give up. I decided to close the plants down until Jane had left Vermillion Sands. I knew it would take me three months to rescore the stock, but I had no alternative.

The next day I received a large order for mixed coloratura herbaceous from the Santiago Garden Choir. They wanted delivery in three weeks.

"I'm sorry," Jane said, when she heard I wouldn't be able to fill the order. "You must wish that I'd never come to Vermillion Sands."

She stared thoughtfully into one of the darkened tanks.

"Couldn't I score them for you?" she suggested.

"No, thanks," I said, laughing, "I've had enough of that already."

"Don't be silly, of course I could."

I shook my head.

Tony and Harry told me I was crazy.

"Her voice has a wide enough range," Tony said. "You admit it yourself."

"What have you got against her?" Harry asked. "She cheats at i-Go?"

"It's nothing to do with that," I said. "But her voice has a wider range than you think."

We played i-Go at Jane's apartment. Jane won ten dollars from each of us.

"I am lucky," she said, very pleased with herself. "I never seem to lose." She counted up the bills and put them away carefully in her bag, her golden skin glowing.

Then Santiago sent me a repeat query.

I found Jane down among the cafés, holding off a siege of admirers.

"Have you given in yet?" she asked me, smiling at the young men.

"I don't know what you're doing to me," I said, "but anything is worth trying."



Back at the shop I raised a bank of perennials up past their thresholds. Jane helped me attach the gas and fluid lines.

"We'll try these first," I said. "Frequencies 543-785. Here's the score."

Jane took off her hat and began to ascend the scale, her voice clear and pure. At first the Columbine hesitated and Jane went down again and drew them along with her. They went up a couple of octaves together and then the plants stumbled and went off at a tangent of stepped chords.

"Try K sharp," I said. I fed a little chlorous acid into the tank and the Columbine followed her up eagerly, the infracalyxes warbling delicate variations on the treble clef.

"Perfect," I said.

It took us only four hours to fill the order.

"You're better than the Arachnid," I congratulated her. "How would you like a job? I'll fit you out with a large cool tank and all the chlorine you can breathe."

"Careful," she told me. "I may say yes. Why don't we re-score a few more of them while we're about it?"

"You're tired," I said. "Let's go and have a drink."

"Let me try the Arachnid," she suggested. "That would be more of a challenge."

Her eyes never left the flower. I wondered what they'd do if I left them together. Try to sing each other to death?

"No," I said. "Tomorrow perhaps."

We sat on the balcony together, glasses at our elbows, and talked the afternoon away.

She told me little about herself, but I gathered that her father had been a mining engineer in Peru and her mother a dancer at a Lima vu-tavern. They'd wandered from deposit to deposit, the father digging his concessions, the mother signing on at the nearest bordello to pay the rent.

"She only sang, of course," Jane added. "Until my father came." She blew bubbles into her glass. "So you think I give them what they want at the Casino. By the way, what do you see?"

"I'm afraid I'm your one failure," I said. "Nothing. Except you."



She dropped her eyes. "That sometimes happens," she said. "I'm glad this time."

A million suns pounded inside me. Until then I'd been reserving judgment on myself.

Harry and Tony were polite, if disappointed.

"I can't believe it," Harry said sadly. "I won't. How did you do it?"

"That mystical left-handed approach, of course," I told him. "All ancient seas and dark wells."

"What's she like?" Tony asked eagerly. "I mean, does she burn, or just tingle?"

Jane sang at the Casino every night from 11 to 3, but apart from that I suppose we were always together. Sometimes in the late afternoons we'd drive out along the beach to the Scented Desert and sit alone by one of the pools, watching the sun fall away behind the reefs and hills, lulling ourselves on the heavy rose-sick air. And when the wind began to blow cool across the sand we'd slip down into the water, bathe ourselves and drive back to town, filling the streets and café terraces with jasmine and musk-rose and helianthemum.

On other evenings we'd go down to one of the quiet bars at Lagoon West, and have supper out on the flats, and Jane would tease the waiters and sing honeybirds and angelcakes to the children who came in across the sand to watch her.

I realize now that I must have achieved a certain notoriety along the beach, but I didn't mind giving the old women—and beside Jane they all seemed to be old women—something to talk about. During the Recess no one cared very much about anything, and for that reason I never questioned myself too closely over my affair with Jane Ciracylides. As I sat on the balcony with her looking out over the cool early evenings or felt her body glowing beside me in the darkness I allowed myself few anxieties.

Absurdly, the only disagreement I ever had with her was over her cheating.

I remember that I once taxed her with it.

"Do you know you've taken over \$500 from me, Jane? You're still doing it. Even now!"



She laughed impishly. "Do I cheat? I'll let you win one day."

"But why do you?" I insisted.

"It's more fun to cheat," she said. "Otherwise it's so boring."

"Where will you go when you leave Vermillion Sands?" I asked her.

She looked at me in surprise. "Why do you say that? I don't think I shall ever leave."

"Don't tease me, Jane. You're a child of another world than this."

"My father came from Peru," she reminded me.

"But you didn't get your voice from him," I said. "I wish I could have heard your mother sing. Had she a better voice than yours, Jane?"

"She thought so. My father couldn't stand either of us."

That was the evening I last saw Jane. We'd changed, and in the half an hour before she left for the Casino we sat on the balcony and I listened to her voice, like a spectral fountain, pour its golden luminous notes into the air. The music remained with me even after she'd gone, hanging faintly in the darkness around her chair.

I felt curiously sleepy, almost sick on the air she'd left behind, and at 11:30, when I knew she'd be appearing on stage at the Casino, I went out for a walk along the beach and a coffee.

As I left the elevator I heard music coming from the shop.

At first I thought I'd left one of the audio switches on, but I knew the voice only too well.

The windows of the shop had been shuttered, so I got in through the passage which led from the garage courtyard round at the back of the apartment house.

The lights had been turned out, but a brilliant glow filled the shop, throwing a golden fire onto the tanks along the counters. Across the ceiling liquid colors danced in reflection.

The music I had heard before, but only in overture.

The Arachnid had grown to three times its size. It towered nine feet high out of the shattered lid of the control tank,



leaves tumid and inflamed, its calyx as large as a bucket, raging insanely.

Arched forward into it, her head thrown back, was Jane.

I ran over to her, my eyes filling with light, and grabbed her arm, trying to pull her away from it.

"Jane!" I shouted over the noise. "Get down!"

She flung my hand away. In her eyes, fleetingly, was a look of shame.

While I was sitting on the stairs in the entrance Tony and Harry drove up.

"Where's Jane?" Harry asked. "Has anything happened to her? We were down at the Casino." They both turned toward the music. "What the hell's going on?"

Tony peered at me suspiciously. "Steve, anything wrong?"

Harry dropped the bouquet he was carrying and started toward the rear entrance.

"Harry!" I shouted after him. "Get back!"

Tony held my shoulder. "Is Jane in there?"

I caught them as they opened the door into the shop.

"Good God!" Harry yelled. "Let go of me, you fool!" He struggled to get away from me. "Steve, it's trying to kill her!"

I jammed the door shut and held them back.

I never saw Jane again. The three of us waited in my apartment. When the music died away we went down and found the shop in darkness. The Arachnid had shrunk to its normal size.

The next day it died.

Where Jane went to I don't know. Not long afterward the Recess ended, and the big government schemes came along and started up all the clocks and kept us too busy working off the lost time to worry about a few bruised petals. Harry told me that Jane had been seen on her way through Red Beach, and I heard recently that someone very like her was doing the nightclubs this side out of Pernambuco.

So if any of you around there keep a choro-florist's and have a Khan-Arachnid orchid, look out for a golden-skinned woman with insects for eyes. Perhaps she'll play i-Go with you, and I'm sorry to have to say it, but she'll always cheat.



# THE OTHER MAN

by Theodore Sturgeon

How do you put together an anthology?

I read. When I find a story I like, I mark it for re-reading. (The Merrill Theory of Lit'ry Criticism is simple: any story I can't enjoy as much the second—or fourth—time as the first does not deserve to be printed more than once.)

But once in a while I finish a story with no mental reservations whatsoever. "The Other Man" was a good bit longer than I wanted, but my immediate response was to reach for the phone and find out for sure whether rights would be available.

Sturgeon was hesitant. Seems there was another one—and just half as long—he wanted me to see first. When I read it ("And Now the News . . .") I appreciated his uncertainty, and cursed my own. If Tony Boucher had not made up my mind for me, by selecting the shorter story for his own anthology, I might be sitting there yet, looking from one to the other. . . .

WHEN HE SAW HER AGAIN, he all but yelled—a wordless, painful bleat, one concentrated syllable to contain five years of loneliness, fury, self-revilement and that agony peculiar to the victim of "the other man." Yet he controlled it, throwing it with a practiced reflex to a tensing of his abdomen and the transient knotting of thigh muscles behind the desk, letting the impact strike as it should, unseen.

Outwardly, he was controlled. It was his job to know the language of eyelids, jaw muscles, lips, and it was his special skill to make them mute. He rose slowly as his nurse ushered her in and while she took the three short paces to meet him. He studied her with an impassive ferocity.



He might have imagined her in old clothes, or in cheap clothes. Here she was in clothes which were both. He had allowed, in his thoughts of her, for change, but he had not thought her nose might have been broken, nor that she might be so frighteningly thin. He had thought she would always walk like something wild . . . free, rather . . . but with stateliness, too, balanced and fine. And indeed she still did so; somehow that hurt him more than anything else could.

She stopped before the desk. He moved his hands behind him; her gaze was on them and he wanted her to look up. He waited until Miss Jarrell discreetly clicked the door shut.

"Osa," he said at last.

"Well, Fred."

The silence became painful. How long did that take—two seconds, three? He made a meaningless sound, part of a laugh, and came around the desk to shift the chair beside it. "Sit down, for heaven's sake."

She sat down and abruptly, for the first time since she had entered the office, she looked directly at him. "You look—you look well, Fred."

"Thanks." He sat down. He wanted to say something, but the only thing that would come readily to his lips was: "You're looking well, too"—such a patent lie that he couldn't tell it. And at last he found something else to say: "A lot has happened."

She nodded and her gaze found a corner of the tooled-leather blotter frame on the desk. She studied it quietly.

"Five years," she said.

Five years in which she must have known everything about him, at first because such a separation is never sharp, but ragged, raveled, a-crackle with the different snaps of different threads at different times; and later, because all the world knew what he was, what he had done. What he stood for.

For him, five years at first filled with a not-Osa, like a sheet of paper from which one has cut a silhouette; and after that, the diminishing presence of Osa as gossip (so little of that, because anyone directly involved in gossip walks usually in a bubble of silence); Osa as rumor, Osa as conjecture.



He had heard that Richard Newell had lost—left—his job about the time he had won Osa, and he had never heard of him working again.

Glancing at Osa's cheap clothes now, and the new small lines in her face, he concluded that whatever Newell had found to do, it could not have been much. Newell, he thought bitterly, is a man God made with only one victory in him and he's used it up.

"Will you help me?" Osa asked stridently.

He thought, Was I waiting for this? Is this some sort of reward, her coming to me for help? Once he might have thought so. At the moment, he did not feel rewarded.

He sat looking at her question as if it were a tangible object, a box of a certain size, a certain shape, made of some special material, which was not to be opened until he had guessed its contents.

*Will you help me?* Money? Hardly—Osa may have lost a great deal, but her towering pride was still with her. Besides, money settles nothing. A little is never enough and helps only until it is gone. A little more puts real solutions a bit further into the future. A whole lot buries the real problem, where it lives like a cancer or a carcinogen.

Not money, then. Perhaps a job? For her? No, he knew her well. She could get her own jobs. She had not, therefore she didn't want one. This could only mean she lived as she did for Newell's sake. Oh, yes, he would be the provider, even if the illusion starved her.

Then a job for Newell? Didn't she know he couldn't be trusted with any responsible job and was not constituted to accept anything less? Of course she knew it.

All of which left only one thing. She must be sure, too, that Newell would accept the idea or she would not be here asking.

He said, "How soon can he start therapy?"

She *flickered*, all over and all at once, as if he had touched her with a high voltage electrode—the first and only indication she had evinced of the terrible tensions she carried. Then she raised her head, her face lit with something beyond words, something big enough, bright enough, to light



and warm the world. His world. She tried to speak.

"Don't," he whispered. He put out his hand and then withdrew it. "You've already said it."

She turned her head away and tried to say something else, but he overrode that, too.

"I'll get paid," he said bluntly. "After his therapy, he'll earn more than enough—" (For both of us? For my bill? To pay you back for all he's done to you?) "—for everything."

"I should have known," she breathed. He understood. She had been afraid he wouldn't take Newell as a patient. She had been afraid, if he did take him, that he might insist on doing it free, the name of which was charity. She need not have worried. *I should have known*. Any response to that, from a shrug to a disclaimer, would destroy a delicacy, so he said nothing.

"He can come any time you say," she told him. This meant, *He isn't doing anything these days*.

He opened a desk book and riffled through it. He did not see it. He said, "I'd like to do some pretty intensive work with him. Six, eight weeks."

"You mean he'd stay here?"

He nodded. "And I'm afraid—I'd prefer that you didn't visit him. Do you mind very much?"

She hesitated. "Are you sure that . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"I'm sure I want to do it," he said, suddenly rough. "I'm sure I'll do everything I can to straighten him out, bar nothing. You wouldn't want me to say I was sure of anything else."

She got to her feet. "I'll call you, Fred." She watched his face for a moment. He did not know if she would want to shake his hand or—or not. She took one deep breath, then turned away and went to the door and opened it.

"Thank you . . ."

He sat down and looked at the closed door. She had worn no scent, but he was aware of her aura in the room, anyway. Abruptly he realized that she had not said "Thank you."

He had.



Osa didn't call. Three days, four, the phone ringing and ringing, and never her voice. Then it didn't matter—rather, she had no immediate reason to call, because the intercom whispered, and when he keyed it, it said in Miss Jarrell's clear tones, "A Mr. Newell to see you, Doctor."

Stupidly he said, "Richard A. Newell?"

Bzz Psss Bzz. "That's right, Doctor."

"Send him in."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Send him in," said the doctor. *I thought that's what I said. What did it sound like?* He couldn't remember. He cleared his throat painfully. Newell came in.

"We-ell, Freddy-boy." (Two easy paces; cocked head, half smile.) "A small world." Without waiting to be asked, he sat down in the big chair at the end of the desk.

At first glance, he had not changed; and then the doctor realized that it was the—what word would do?—the symphonic quality of the man, the air of perfect blending—it was that which had not changed.

Newell's diction had always suited the clothes he chose and his movements were as controlled as his speech. He still wore expensive clothes, but they were years old—yet so good they hardly showed it. The doctor was immediately aware that under the indestructible creases and folds was a lining almost certainly frayed through; that the elegant face was like a cheap edition printed from worn plates and the mind behind it an interdependence of flimsy parts so exactly matched that in the weak complex there was no weakest component. A machine in that condition might run indefinitely—idling.

The doctor closed his eyes with a brief impatience and consigned the concepts to the limbo of oversimplified analogies. "What do you want?"

Newell raised his eyebrows a fraction. "I thought you knew. Oh, *I* see," he supplemented, narrowing his eyes shrewdly. "One of those flash questions that are supposed to jolt the truth out of a man. Now let's see, just what did pop into my head when you asked me that?" He looked at the top of the window studiously, then leaned forward and shot



out a finger. "More."

"More?"

"More—that's the answer to that question. I want more money. More time to myself. More fun." He widened his eyes and looked disconcertingly into the doctor's. "More women," he said, "and better. Just—more. You know. Can do?"

"I can handle only so much," said the doctor levelly. His thighs ached. "What you do with what I give you will be up to you. . . . What do you know about my methods?"

"Everything," said Newell off-handedly.

Without a trace of sarcasm, the doctor said, "That's fine. Tell me everything about my methods."

"Well, skipping details," said Newell, "you hypnotize a patient, poke around until you find the parts you like. These you bring up by suggestion until they dominate. Likewise, you minimize other parts that don't suit you and drive them underground. You push and you pull and blow up and squeeze down until you're satisfied, and then you bake him in your oven—I'm using a figure of speech, of course—until he comes out just the proper-sized loaf. Right?"

"You—" The doctor hesitated. "You skipped some details."

"I said I would."

"I heard you." He held Newell's gaze soberly for a moment. "It isn't an oven or a baking."

"I said that, too."

"I was wondering why."

Newell snorted—amusement, patronization, something like that. Not irritation or impatience. Newell had made a virtual career out of never appearing annoyed. He said, "I watch you work. Every minute, I watch you work; I know what you're doing."

"Why not?"

Newell laughed. "I'd be much more impressed in an atmosphere of mystery. You ought to get some incense, tapestries in here. Wear a turban. But back to you and your bake-oven, what-do-you-call-it—"

"Psychostat."



"Yes, psychostat. Once you've taken a man apart and put him together again, your psychostat fixes him in the new pattern the way boiling water fixes an egg. Otherwise he'd gradually slip back into his old, wicked ways."

He winked amiably.

Not smiling, the doctor nodded. "It is something like that. You haven't mentioned the most important part, though."

"Why bother? Everybody knows about *that*." His eye flicked to the walls and he half-turned to look behind him. "Either you have no vanity or you have more than anyone, Fred. What did you do with all the letters and citations that any human being would frame and hang? Where's all the plaques that got so monotonous on the newscasts?" He shook his head. "It can't be no vanity, so it must be more than anyone. You must feel that this whole plant—you yourself—are your citation." He laughed, the professional friendly laugh of a used-car salesman. "Pretty stuffy, Freddy."

The doctor shrugged.

"I know what the publicity was for," said Newell. "A fiendish plot to turn you into a personality kid for the first time in your life." Again the engaging smile. "It isn't hard to get you off the subject, Freddy-boy."

"Yes, it is," said the doctor without heat. "I was just making the point that what I do here is in accordance with an ethical principle which states that any technique resulting in the destruction of individual personality, surgical or otherwise, is murder. Your remarks on its being publicly and legally accepted now are quite appropriate. If you must use that analogy about taking a patient all apart and putting him together again in a different and better way, you should add that none of the parts are replaced with new ones and none are left out. Everything you have now you'll have after your therapy."

"All of which," said Newell, his eyes twinkling, "is backed up by the loftiest set of ethics since Mohandas K. Gandhi."

The twinkle disappeared behind a vitreous screen. The voice was still soft. "Do you suppose I'd be fool enough to put myself in your hands—*your* hands—if I hadn't swallowed you and your legendary ethics down to here?" He



jabbed himself on the chest. "You're so rammed full of ethical conduct you don't have room for an honest insult. You have ethics where most people carry their guts."

"Why did you come here," asked the doctor calmly, "if you feel that much animosity?"

"I'll tell you why," smiled Newell. "First, I'm enjoying myself. I have a sense of values that tells me I'm a better man than you are, law, fame and all, and I have seventy-odd ways—one of which you were once married to—to prove it. Why wouldn't anyone enjoy that?"

"That was 'first.' You've got a 'secondly'?"

"A beaut," said Newell. "This one's for kicks, too: I think I'm the toughest nut you've ever had to crack. I'm real happy about the way I am—all I want is *more*, not anything *different*. If you don't eliminate my lovable character or any part of it—and you won't; you've stacked the deck against yourself—you'll wind up with just what you see before you, hi-fi amplified. And just for a little salt in the stew, I might as well tell you that I know you can't operate well without hypnosis, and I can't be hypnotized."

"You can't?"

"That's right. Look it up in a book. Some people can't be hypnotized because they won't, and I won't."

"Why not?"

Newell shrugged and smiled.

"I see," said the doctor. He rose and went to the wall, where a panel slid aside for him. He took up a shining hypodermic, snicked off the sterile sheath and plunged the needle into an ampoule. He returned to the desk, holding the hypodermic point upward. "Roll up your sleeve, please."

"I also happen to know," Newell said, complying readily, "that you're going to have one hell of a time sorting out drug-reaction effects from true responses, even with neoscopolamine."

"I don't expect my work to be easy. Clench your fist, please."

Newell did, laughing as the needle bit. The laugh lasted four syllables and then he slumped silently in his chair.

The doctor took out a blank case book and carefully en-



tered Newell's name and the date and a few preliminary notes. In the "Medication" column, he wrote, *10 cc neutral saline solution*.

He paused then and looked at the "better" man and murmured, "So you can run a mile faster than Einstein."

"All ready, Doctor."

"Right away."

He went to the rack in the corner and took down a white coat. Badge of office, he thought, cloak of Hippocrates, evolved through an extra outdoor duster we used to wear to keep the bodily humors off our street clothes . . . and worn today because, for patients, the generalization "doctor" is an easier departure point for therapeutics than the bewildering specific "man." Next step, the ju-ju mask, and full circle.

He turned into the west corridor and collided with Miss Thomas, who was standing across from Newell's closed door.

"Sorry!" they said in unison.

"Really my fault," said Miss Thomas. "I thought I ought to speak to you first, Doctor. He—he's not completely dismantled."

"They very frequently aren't."

"I know. Yes, I know that." Miss Thomas made a totally uncharacteristic, meaningless flutter of the hands and then welded them angrily to her starched flanks.

The doctor felt amusement and permitted it to show. Miss Thomas, his head technician, was neither human nor female during working hours, and the touch of color, of brightness in her lack of ease pleased him somehow.

She said, "I'm familiar with the—uh—unexpected, Doctor. Naturally. But after eighty hours of machine catalysis, I don't expect a patient to resemble anything but a row of parts laid out on a laboratory bench."

"And what does this patient resemble?"

There was a sudden, soft peal of delighted feminine laughter from the closed door. Together they looked at its bland surface and then their eyes met.



"Two hundred cycles," said Miss Thomas. "Listen to her."

They listened: Miss Jarrell's voice, a cooing, inarticulate Miss Jarrell, was saying, "Oh . . . you!" And more laughter.

Miss Thomas said severely, "I know what you're thinking about Hildy Jarrell, but don't. That's exactly what I did myself." Again she made the uncharacteristic fluttery gesture. "Oh-h!" she breathed impatiently.

Because his impulses were kind, the doctor ignored most of this and picked up only, "Two hundred cycles. What do you get at the other frequencies?"

"Oh, that's all right, all of it. Average response. Pre-therapeutic personality responds best at eighty cycles. Everywhere else, he's nice and accessible. Anyway," she said a little louder, obviously to drown out another soft sudden chuckle from behind the door, "I just wanted you to know that I've done what I can. I didn't want you to think I'd skipped anything in the spectrum. I haven't. It's just that there's a personality in the 200-cycle area that won't dismantle."

"Yet," he corrected mildly.

"Oh, *you* can do it," she said in rapid embarrassment. "I didn't mean . . . I only meant . . ."

She drew a deep breath and started over. "I just wanted you to be sure *my* job's done. As to what you can do, you'll handle it, all right. Only—"

"Only what, Miss Thomas?"

"It's a pity, that's all," she blurted, and pushed past him to disappear around the corner.

He shook his head, puzzlement and laughter wrestling gently deep inside him. Only then did something she had said fully register with him: "*. . . there's a personality in the 200-cycle area that won't dismantle.*"

That woman, he thought, has the kind of precision which might be clouded by emotion, but nothing would eliminate it. If she said there's a personality in the 200-cycle area, she meant just that. A personality, not a component or a matrix or a complex.

As she herself had put it, after catalysis a patient should



resemble nothing more than a row of parts on a lab bench. Down through the levels of hypnosis, audible frequencies would arbitrarily be assigned to various parts of the personality, and by suggestion each part would respond to its frequency throughout the therapy. Any part could be summoned, analyzed, then minimized, magnified, stressed or quelled in the final modulation and made permanent in the psychostat. But at the stage Newell was in—should be in—these were *parts*, sub-assemblies at most. What did she mean “a personality” in the 200-cycle area?

She was wrong, of course. *Oh, God*, he thought, *she's wrong, isn't she?*

He opened the door.

Miss Jarrell did not see him. He watched for a long moment, then said, just loud enough to be heard over the soft thrumming of the 200-cycle note from the speakers, “Don't stop, Miss Jarrell. I'd like to see a little more of this.”

Miss Jarrell flung up a scarlet face.

The doctor said again, quietly but with great force, “Go on, please.”

She turned away to the bed, her back held with a painful rigidity and her ears, showing through her hair, looking like the tips of bright little tongues.

“It's all *right*,” soothed the doctor. “It's all right, Miss Jarrell. You'll see him again.”

She made a soft sound with her nostrils, grinned ruefully and went to the controls. She set one of them for the patient's allotted sleep-command frequency and hit the master switch. There was a gentle explosion of sound—“white” noise, a combination of all audio frequencies, which served to disorient the dismantled patient, his reflexive obedience attempting to respond to all commands at once—for ten seconds, and then it automatically faded, leaving the 550-cycle “sleep” note. The patient's face went blank and he lay back slowly, his eyes closing. He was asleep before his head reached the pillow.

The doctor stood suspended in thought for some time. Miss Jarrell gently arranged the patient's blanket. It was not



done dutifully nor as part of the busyness of waiting for his next move. For some reason, it touched the doctor deeply and pulled him out of his reverie. "Let's have the P.T., Miss Jarrell."

"Yes, Doctor." She consulted the index and carefully set the controls. At his nod, she touched the master switch. Again the white noise, and then the deep moo of the 80-cycle tone.

The P.T.—pre-therapeutic—personality would be retained untouched throughout the treatment, right up until the final setting process in the psychostat, except, of course, for the basic post-hypnotic command which kept all segments under control of the audio spectrum. The doctor watched the sleeping face and was aware of a most unprofessional desire to have something other than that untouched P.T. appear.

He glanced at Miss Jarrell without turning his head. She should leave now, and ordinarily she would. But she was not behaving ordinarily just now.

The patient's eyes half-opened and stayed that way for a time. It was like the soft startlement of a feline which is aware of something, undecided whether the something deserves more attention than sleep, and therefore simply waits, armed and therefore relaxed.

Then he saw the eyes move, though the lids did not. This was the feline taking stock, but deluding its enemies into thinking it still drowsy. The man changed like an aurora, which is ever the same while you watch, but something quite different if you look away and look back. *I think in analogies*, the doctor chided himself, *when I don't like the facts*.

"Well, Freddy-boy," drawled Richard A. Newell.

Behind him, he heard Miss Jarrell's almost inaudible sigh and her brisk quiet footsteps as she turned on the speech recorder, crossed the room and closed the door behind her.

Newell said, "Nurse is an odd term for a woman built like that. How you doing, Freddy?"

"Depends," said the doctor.

Newell sat up and stretched. He waved at the red eye of the recorder. "Everything I say is taken down and may be



used against me, hm?"

"Everything is used, yes. Not—"

"Oh, spare me the homilies, Fred. Transcribe them yourself, do you?"

"I—no." As he caught Newell's thought, and knew exactly the kind of thing the man was going to do next, he felt himself filling up with impotent rage. It did not show.

"Fine, fine." Projecting his voice a bit, Newell said over an elaborate yawn, "Haven't waked up like this since I was a kid. You know, disoriented, wondering for a moment where I was. Last bed I was in wasn't so lonesome. Missed thirty of those last forty winks, the way she was all over me. 'Dick, oh, Dick, please . . .'" he mimicked cruelly. "Told her to shut up and get breakfast."

He laughed outright, obviously not at anything he had said, but at the writhing silent thing within the doctor, which he could not see but knew must be there.

He glanced again at the pilot light on the recorder and said, "Mentioning no names, of course," and the doctor understood immediately that names would be mentioned, places, dates and interrelationships, whenever Newell chose . . . which would be when the suspense ceased to entertain him. Meanwhile, the doctor could prepare himself for the behind-the-back gossip, the raised eyebrows of the transcribing typist, the after-hours debates as to the ethical position of a doctor's practicing on the man who had . . . who was . . .

The sequence spiraled down to a low level of his personal inferno and flickered there, hot and smokeless.

"You didn't tell me," said Newell. "How you doing? Find the secret of my success yet?"

The doctor shrugged easily, which was not easy to do. "We haven't begun."

"Thought not." Newell snorted. "By the time you're finished, you won't have begun, either."

"Why do you say that?"

"I extrapolate it. I come here, you give me a shot of knock-out drops, I get a sound sleep and wake up rested and cheerful. Otherwise, nothing. Yet I know that you've taken my slumbering corpus, poked it, prodded it, checked it in



and wrung it out, tooted on your tooters, punched cards and clicked out four miles of computer tape—for what? I'm still me, only rested up a little."

"How do you know we did all that?"

"I read the papers." When the doctor made no reply, Newell laughed again. "You and your push-button therapy." He looked up in recall, as if reading words off the ceiling. "What's the claim—82% of your patients cured?"

"Modulated."

"Pretty word, modulated. Pretty percentage, too. What kind of a sieve do you use?"

"Sieve?"

"Don't tell me you don't select your patients!"

"No, we take them as they come."

"Ha. You talk like the Lysenkoists. Remember them? Russian genetics experts fifty years back. They claimed results like that. They claimed non-selective methodology, too, even when some of the people supposed to be breeding split-kernel corn were seen splitting the kernels with a knife. Even the Communists rejected them after a while." He flicked a wolfish glance at the recorder and grinned. "But then," he said clearly, "no Communist would reject *you*, Freddy."

Of the four possible responses which came to him, the doctor could find none that would sound unlike a guilty protest, so he said nothing. Newell's widening grin informed him that his silence was just as bad.

"Ah, Fred, m'boy, I know you. I know you well. I knew a lot about you five years ago and I've learned a lot more since." He touched the dark wiry tuft between his collar-bones. "Like, for example, you haven't a single hair on your chest. Or so I've been told."

Again the doctor used silence as a rejoinder. He could examine his feelings later—he knew he would; he inescapably must. For now, he knew that any answer would fall into Newell's quiver as new arrows. Silence was a condition Newell could not maintain nor tolerate; silence made Newell do the talking, take the offensive . . . inform on and expose his own forces. Silence Newell could use only sometimes; words, always.



Newell studied him for a moment and then, apparently deciding that in order to return to a target, it was necessary to leave it temporarily, looked at the compact control panel. "I've read a lot about that. Push one button, I'm a fighting engine. Push another, I lie down with the lamb. Who was it once said humanity will evolve into a finger and a button, and every time the finger wants anything, it will push the button—and that will be the end of humanity, because the finger will get too damn lazy to push the button?" He wagged his head. "You're going to gadget yourself clear out of a living, Fred."

"Did you read what was written over the entrance when you came here?" the doctor asked.

"I noticed there was something there," said Newell amiably, "and no, I didn't read it. I assumed it was some saw about the sanctity of the personality, and I knew I'd get all I could stand of that from you and your acolytes."

"Then I think you ought to know a little more about what you call 'push-button therapy,' Newell. Hypnosis isn't therapy and neither is the assigned audio-response technique we use. Hypnosis gives us access to the segments of personality and creates a climate for therapy, and that's all. The therapy itself stands or falls on the ability of the therapist, which is true of my school as it is of all others short of the lobotomists."

"Well, well, well. I goaded a real brag out of you at last. I didn't know you had it in you." Newell chuckled. "82% effective and you do it all your little self. Now ain't you something? Tell me, able therapist, how do you account for the 18% who get by you?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I might alter the figures for you. Who are these sturdy souls?"

"Organic defectives," said the doctor. *And certain others . . .* but he kept that to himself.

Newell shouted, "Touché!" and fell back with a roar of appreciative laughter. But the doctor saw his eyes before he closed them, little windows with all the faces of hate looking out.



The doctor was delighted. He braced himself for the reaction against his own pleasure which he could always expect from his austere professionalism, but it did not come. He put this fact away with the others he knew he must examine later.

Newell was saying, "You can't have it both ways, Fred. About hypnosis not being therapy, I mean. What's this I heard somewhere about certain frequencies having certain effects, no matter who you are?"

"Oh, that. Yes, some parts of the audio spectrum do affect most people. The subsonics—fourteen to around twenty cycles, for example, if you use enough amplitude—they scare people. And beat-frequencies between two tones, where the beat approaches the human pulse, sometimes have peculiar psychological effects. But these are byways, side phenomena. We use the ones we can rely on and ignore or avoid the others. Audio frequencies happen to be convenient, accurate and easy for patient and therapist to identify.

"But they're not essential. We could probably do the same thing with spoken commands or a spectrum of odors. Audio is best, though; the pure electronic tone is unfamiliar to most people and so has no associations except the ones we give it. That's why we don't use 60 cycles—the hum you're surrounded by all your life from AC devices."

"And what about if you're tone-deaf?" asked Newell, with an underlay of gloating which could only mean that he was talking about himself.

"Nobody's *that* tone-deaf, except the organic defectives."

"Oh," said Newell disappointedly, then returned to the half-sneering search for information. "And so the patient walks out of here prepared for the rest of his life to go into a state of estrus every time an English horn sounds A-440?"

"You know better than that," retorted the doctor, for once not concealing his impatience. "That's what the psychostat is for. Every frequency the patient responds to is recorded there"—he waved at the controls—"along with its intensity. These are analyzed by a computer and compared by another one with a pattern which shows which segments are out of line—like too much anger or unwarranted



fear, in terms of the patient's optimum. The psychostat applies dampers on the big ones and amplifies the atrophied ones until the response matches the master pattern. When every segment is at optimum—the patient's, mind you; no one else's—the new pattern is fixed by an overall posthypnotic which removes every other suggestion that has been applied."

"So the patient *does* go out of here hypnotized!"

"He walks in here hypnotized," said the doctor. "I'm surprised at you, Newell. For a man who knows so much about my specialty, you shouldn't need to be lectured on the elementals."

"I just like the sound of your voice," Newell said acidly, but the acid was dilute. "What do you mean, the patient walks in here hypnotized?"

"Most people are, most of the time. In the basic sense, a man is under hypnosis whenever any one of his senses does not respond to a present stimulus, or when his attention is diverted even slightly from his physical surroundings. You're under hypnosis when you read a book, or when you sit and think and don't see what you're staring at, or when you bark your shin on a coffee-table you didn't see under bright lights."

"That's so much hair splitting." Newell didn't even pause before his next sentence, which came from quite a different area than his scoffing incredulity. "Why didn't you tell me all this when I said I couldn't be hypnotized?"

"I preferred to believe you when you said you knew it all."

Every pretense of joviality disappeared. "Listen, you," Newell grated, in the ugliest tone of voice the doctor had ever heard, "you better watch what you're doing."

It was time again for silence and the doctor used it. He gave Newell no choice but to lie there and stare at his own words. He watched the man regaining his poise, laboriously, hand over hand, then resting, testing, waiting to be sure he could speak again.

"Well," Newell said at length, and the doctor almost admired him for the smoothness of his tone, "it's been fun so far and it'll wind up more so. If you really can do what you



say, I'll make it right with you, Freddy-boy. I'll really pay off."

"That's nice," said the doctor guardedly.

"Nice? Just nice? Man, I'll give you a treasure you couldn't get any other way. *You* could never get," he amended. He looked up into the doctor's face brightly. "Nearly five solid years a-building and it's all yours. Me, I'll start a new one."

"What are you talking about?"

"My little black book. Got everything in it from pig to princess. Whoever you are, however you feel from time to time, there's a playmate in there for you. You could really use it, Freddy. You must have stored up quite a charge since you-know-what," he said, grinning at the recording machine. "Fix me up, I fix you up. Fair enough?"

The silence this time was unplanned. The doctor walked to the controls, dialed 550 and hit the master. The 80-cycle note died, the white noise took over, and then the 550-cycle sleep command. The doctor felt that gleaming grin leave the room like a pressure off his back.

He is a patient, the doctor thought at last, out of his hard-held numbness. He is a patient in a therapeutic environment as detached from the world as a non-Euclidean theorem. There is no Newell; there is only a patient. There is no Fred, only a doctor. There is no Osa, only episodes. Newell will be returned to the world because he has a personality and it has an optimum, because that is what I do here and that is what I am for.

He touched the annunciator control and said, "Miss Jarrell, I want you."

She opened the door almost immediately; she must have been waiting in the corridor. "Oh, Doctor, I *am* sorry! I know I shouldn't do anything like that. It's just—well, before I knew it . . ."

"Don't apologize, Miss Jarrell. I mean it—don't. You may even have done some good. But I have to know exactly what influences were . . . no, don't explain," he said when she tried to speak. "Show me."

"Oh, I couldn't! It's so—*silly!*"



"Go on, Miss Jarrell. It isn't silly at all."

Flushing, she passed him with her eyes averted and went to the controls. She dialed a frequency and activated the master, and as the white noise roared out, she went to the foot of the bed, waiting. The audio faded, all but a low, steady thrum—200 cycles.

The patient opened his eyes. He *smiled*. It was a smile the like of which the doctor had never seen before, though he might have imagined one. Not, however, on the face of Richard A. Newell. There was nothing conceivable in Richard A. Newell to co-exist with such an expression.

The patient glanced down and saw Miss Jarrell. Ecstatic recognition crossed his face. He grasped the covers and whipped them over his head, and lay stiff and still as a pencil.

"You . . . !" crooned Miss Jarrell, and the blanket was flung down away from the patient's head, and he gurgled with laughter. She snatched at his toes, and he bucked and chortled, and covered up again. "The bumble bee—" she murmured, and he quivered, a paroxysm of delighted anticipation—"goes round the tree . . . and goes bzz . . . bzzz . . . BZZ!" and she snatched at his toes again.

He whipped the blanket away from his face and gave himself up to an explosion of merriment which was past vocalization—in fact, but for that soft and intense chuckle, he had made hardly a sound.

"You . . ."

The doctor watched and slowly felt a vacuum in the scene somehow, and a great tugging to fill it with understanding, and the understanding would not come until the word "ridiculous" slipped through his mind . . . and that was it: This should be ridiculous, a grown man reacting like a seven-month infant. What was extraordinary was that it was *not* ridiculous and that it was indeed a grown man, not a mere infantile segment.

It was a thing to be felt. There was a—a radiance in these bursts of candid merriment which, though certainly child-like, were not childish. It was a quality to be laughed with, not laughed at.



He glanced at the audio selector. Yes, this was the 200-cycle response that Miss Thomas had mentioned. "A personality—" He began to see what she had meant. He began, too, to be afraid.

He went to the wall rack where the technician's response-breakdown was clipped. It was a standard form, one column showing the frequencies arbitrarily assigned to age levels (700 cycles and the command suggestion: "You are eleven years old") and another column with the frequencies assigned to emotional states (800 cycles and "You are very angry"; 14 cycles, "You are afraid").

Once the patient was completely catalyzed, response states could readily be induced and their episodic material extracted—fear at age three, sexuality at fourteen, fear plus anger plus gratification at age six, or any other combination.

The 200-cycle area was blotchy with Miss Thomas's erasures, but otherwise blank.

The doctor inwardly shook himself and got a firm grip. He went to the bed and stood looking down at that sensitive, responsive face.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The patient looked at him, eyes bright, a glad, anticipatory smile on his lips. The doctor sensed that the man did not understand him, but that he was eager to; further, that from the bottom of his heart the man was prepared to be delighted when he did understand. It filled the doctor with an almost tender anxiety, a protectiveness. This creature could not be disappointed—that would be inartistic to the point of gross injustice.

"What's your name?" the doctor pursued.

The patient smiled at him and sat up. He looked into the doctor's eyes with an almost unbearable attention and a great waiting, ready to treasure whatever might come next if only—if only he could identify it.

One thing's certain, mused the doctor: this was no infantile segment. Child, yes, but not quite child.

"Miss Jarrell."

"Yes, Doctor."

"The initial, the middle initial on the chart. It's 'A.' What



does that stand for?"

After a moment, "Anson," she said.

To the patient, he said. "I'm going to call you Anson. That will be your name." He put his hand on the patient's chest. "Anson."

The man looked down at the hand and up, expectantly, at the doctor.

The doctor said, touching his white coat, "Doctor. Doctor." He pointed at Miss Jarrell. "Miss—"

"Hildy," said Miss Jarrell quickly.

The doctor could not help it; he grinned briefly. This elicited a silent burst of glee from the patient, which was shut off instantly, to be replaced by the anticipation, the watchful and ready attentiveness. He burdened the doctor with his waiting and the necessity to appreciate. Yet what burden was it, really? This creature would appreciate the back of a hand across the face or two choruses of the Londonderry Air.

The doctor poised over the bed, waiting for an answer, and it came:

The burden lay in the necessity not to please this entity, but to do this thing properly, in ways which would never have to be withdrawn later. *He trusts me*—there, in three words, was the burden.

The doctor took the patient's hand and put the fingertips close to his lips. "An-son," he said. Then he put the hand to the patient's own mouth, nodding encouragingly.

The patient obviously wanted to do it right, too—more, even, than the doctor. His lips trembled. Then, "An-son," he said.

Across the room, Miss Jarrell clapped her hands and laughed happily.

"That's right," smiled the doctor, pointing. "Anson. You're Anson." He touched his own chest. "Doc-tor." He pointed again. "Miss Hildy."

The man in the bed sat up slowly, his eyes on the doctor's face. "An-son. Anson." And then a light seemed to flood him. He hit his chest with his knuckles. "Anson!" he cried. He felt his own biceps, his face, and laughed.

"That's right," said the doctor.



"Doc . . . tok," said Anson with difficulty. He looked wistful, almost distraught.

"That's okay. That's good. Doctor."

"Doc-tor." Anson turned brightly to Miss Jarrell and pointed. "Miss Hildy!" he sang triumphantly.

"Bless you," she said, saying it like a blessing.

While Anson grinned, the doctor stood for a moment grinning back like a fool and feeling frightened and scratching his head.

Then he went to work.

"Richard," he said sharply, and watched for a reaction. There was none, just the happy eagerness.

"Dick."

Nothing.

"Newell."

Nothing.

"Hold up your right hand. Close your eyes. Look out of the window. Touch your hair. Let me see your tongue."

Anson did none of these things.

The doctor wet his lips. "Osa."

Nothing.

He glanced at Miss Jarrell. "Anson," he said, and Anson increased his attention. It was startling; the doctor hadn't known he could. "Anson, listen." He pulled back his sleeve and showed his watch. "Watch. Watch." He held it close, then put it to Anson's ear.

Anson gurgled delightedly. "Tk tk," he mimicked. He cocked his head and listened carefully to the doctor repeating the word. Then. "Wats. Watts. *Watch*," he said, and clapped his hands exactly as Miss Jarrell had done before.

"All right, Miss Jarrell. That's enough for now. Turn him off."

He heard her intake of breath and thought she was going to speak. When she did not, he faced her and smiled. "It's all right, Miss Jarrell. We'll take good care of him."

She looked for the sarcasm in his face, between his words, back in recall, anywhere, and did not find it. She laughed suddenly and heartily; he knew she was laughing at herself, spellbound as she had been, anxious for the shining some-



thing which hid in the 200-cycle area.

"I could use a little therapy myself, I guess," she said wonderingly.

"I would recommend it to you if you had reacted any other way."

She went to the door and opened it. "I like working here," she said, blushed, and went out.

The doctor's smile disappeared with the click of the latch. He glanced once at the patient, then moved blindly to the controls. He locked them and went back to his office.

Miss Thomas knocked. Getting no answer, she entered the doctor's office. "Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought—"

The expression on his face halted her. She took the reports she carried and put them down on the desk. He did not move. She went to the cabinet, which slid open for her, and shook two white pills from a vial. She broke a beam with a practiced flick of the wrist. A paper cup dropped and filled with ice-water. She took it to the doctor. "Here."

He said rapidly, "What? What? What?" and, seeking, looked the wrong way to find her voice. He turned again, saw her. "What?" and put his hand for a moment over his eyes. "Oh, Miss Thomas."

"Here," said the technician again.

"What is it?" He seemed to be trying to identify the cup, as if he had never seen one before.

Because she was kind, Miss Thomas took it another way. "Dexamyl."

"Thank you." He took them, swallowed water, and looked up at her. "Thank you," he said again. "I seem to be . . ."

"It's all right," said Miss Thomas firmly. "Everything's all right."

Some of his control returned and he chuckled a little. "Using my own therapy on me?"

"Everything *is* all right, far as I know," she said, in the grumpy tone under which she so often concealed herself. She folded her arms with an all but audible snap and glared out of the window.



The doctor glanced up at her rigid back and, in spite of himself, was amused. She was daring him to order her out, challenging him not to tell her what the trouble was. He recalled, then, that she was doubtlessly gnawed like the Spartan boy by the fox of curiosity she was hiding under her starch. *There's a personality in the 200-cycle area that won't dismantle . . . oh, you can do it, but . . . it's a pity, that's all*, he recalled.

He said, "It's one of those things of Prince's."

She was quiet for so long that she might not have heard him and I'm damned, he thought, if I'm going to spell it out for her.

But she said, "I don't believe it," and, into his continued silence, "Morton Prince's alternate-personality idea might be the only explanation for some cases, but it doesn't explain this one."

"It doesn't?"

"Two personalities in one mind—three or more sometimes. One of his case histories was of a woman who had five distinct egos. I'm not quarreling with the possibility, Doctor."

Every time Miss Thomas surprised him, it was in a way that pleased him. He would, he thought, think that through some day.

"Then why quarrel with this one?" he asked.

Unasked and unabashed, she sat down in the big chair. They sat for a time in a companionable, cerebral quiet.

Then she said, "Prince's case histories show a lot of variation. I mean one ego will be refined, educated, another rough and stupid. Sometimes the prime was aware of the others, sometimes not; sometimes they hated each other. But there was this denominator: If the condition existed at all, it existed because the alternate ego *could* communicate and did. Had to."

"Morton Prince wasn't equipped for segmentation under tertiary hypnosis."

"I think that's beside the point," Miss Thomas said flatly. "I'll say it again: Prince's alternate egos *had* to emerge. I think that's the key. If an ego can't communicate and won't



emerge unless you drag it out by the scruff of the neck, I don't think it deserves to be called an ego."

"You can say that and yet you've seen Ans—the alternate?"

"Anson. Hildy Jarrell told me about the christening. Yes, I can say that."

He looked at her levelly and she dropped her eyes. He remembered again their encounter in the corridor in front of Newell's door. *Don't blame Hildy Jarrell—that's exactly what I did myself.*

"Miss Thomas, why are you trying to herd me away from this case?"

"Doctor!"

He closed his eyes and said, "You find a segment that you can't break. It's a particularly—well, let's say that whatever it is, you like it." He paused and, exactly in time, said, "Don't interrupt me. You know very well that the rock bottom of my practice is that personality is inviolate. You know that if this is a genuine case of alternate ego, I wouldn't touch it—I couldn't, because the man has only one body, and to normalize him, I'd have to destroy one ego or the other.

"Now you knew perfectly well that I'd discover the alternate. So the first thing you do is call my attention to it, and the next thing you do is give me an argument about it, knowing I'd disagree with you, knowing that if there was any doubt in my mind, it would disappear in the argument."

"Why on earth would I do a thing like that?" she challenged.

"I told you—so I'd get off the case—reset the P.T. and discharge him."

"Damn it," said Miss Thomas bitterly.

"That's the trouble with knowing too much about a colleague's thought processes," he said into midair. "You can't manipulate somebody who understands you."

"Which one of us do you mean?" she demanded.

"I really don't know. Now are you going to tell me why you tried this, or shall I tell you?"

"I'll tell you," said Miss Thomas. "You're tired. I don't want anything to happen to that Anson. As soon as I found



him, I knew exactly what would happen if you went ahead with Newell's therapy. Anson would be the intruder. I don't care how—how beautiful an intruder he might be, he could only show up as an aberration, something extraneous. You'd pack him down to pill size and bury him so deep in a new-model Newell that he'd never see daylight again. I don't know how much consciousness he has, but I do know I couldn't bear to have him buried alive.

"And supposing you committed therapy on Anson alone, brought him up like a shiny young Billy Budd and buried that heel Newell—if you'll pardon the unprofessional term, Doctor—down inside him somewhere? You think Anson would be able to defend himself? You think he could take a lane in the big rat race? This world is no place for cherubim.

"So there isn't a choice. I don't know what Anson shares with Newell and I never will. I do know that however Anson has existed so far, it hasn't spoiled him, and the only chance he has to go on being what he is is to be left alone."

"*Quod erat demonstrandum*," said the doctor, spreading his hands. "Very good. Now you know why I've never treated alternate ego cases. And perhaps you also know how useless your little machination was."

"I had to be sure, that's all. Well, I'm glad. I'm sorry."

He smiled briefly. "I follow that." He watched her get up, her face softened by content and her admiration of him unconcealed.

She bent an uncharacteristically warm gaze on him and moved toward the door. She looked back once on the way, and once there, she stopped and turned to face him. "Something's the matter."

There were, he knew, other ways to handle this, but at the moment he had to hurt something. There were several ways to do the hurt, too, and he chose the worst one, saying nothing.

Miss Thomas became Miss Thomas again, her eyes like one-way mirrors and her stance like a soldier. She looked out of herself at him and said, "You're going on with the therapy."



He did not deny it.

"Are you going to tell me which one gets it?"

"Depends on what you mean by 'gets it,'" he said with grim jocularly.

She treated the bad joke as it deserved to be treated and simply waited for it to go away.

He said, "Both."

She repeated the word in exactly his inflection, as though she could understand it better if it were as near as her own lips. Then she shook her head impatiently. "You can apply just so much therapy and then there's a choice to make."

"There's this choice to make," he said, in a constricted tone that hurt his throat. "Newell lives in a society he isn't fit for. He's married to a woman he doesn't deserve. If it is in my power to make him more fit and more deserving, what is the ethical choice?"

Miss Thomas moved close to the desk. "You implied that you'd turned down cases like this before. You sent them back into society, untreated."

"Once they sent lepers back untreated," he snapped. "Therapy has to start somewhere, with someone."

"Start it on rats first."

I am, he said, fortunately to himself. He considered her remark further and decided not to answer it, knowing how deeply she must regret saying it.

She said, "Hildy Jarrell will quit when she finds this out."

"She will not quit," said the doctor immediately and positively.

"And as for me—"

"Yes?"

Their gazes locked like two steel rods placed tip to tip, pressing, pressing, knowing that some slight wavering, some side drift, must come and must make a break and a collision.

But instead, she broke. She closed her eyes against tears and clasped her hands. "Please," she whispered, "do you have to go through with this? Why? Why?"

Oh, God, he thought, I hate this. "I can't discuss it." That, he thought painfully, is altogether the truth.

She said heavily, "I don't think you should." He knew it



was her last word.

"It is a psychological decision, Miss Thomas, and not a technological one." He knew it was unfair to fall back on rank and specialty when he no longer had an argument he could use. But this had to stop.

She nodded. "Yes, Doctor." She went out, closing the door too quietly. He thought, What do you have to be to a person so you can run after someone crying, Come back! Come back! Don't hate me! I'm in trouble and I hurt!

It took Miss Jarrell about forty minutes to get to the office. The doctor had figured it at about thirty-five. He was quite ready for her.

She knocked with one hand and turned the knob with the other and flew in like an angry bee. Her face was flushed and there was a little pale tension-line parenthesizing each nostril. "Doctor—"

"Ah, Miss Jarrell," he said with a huge joviality. "I was just about to call you. I need your help for a special project."

"Well, I'm sorry about *that*," she began. Her eyes were wide and aflame, and the rims were slightly pink. He wished he could magic a few minims of azacyclonol into her bloodstream; she could use it. "I've come to—"

"The Newell case."

"Yes, the Newell case. I don't think—"

He had almost to shout this time. "And *I* think you're just the one for the job. I want that 200-cycle entity—you know, Anson—I want him educated."

"Well, I think it's just—*what*?" And as the angry syllable ricocheted around the office, she stared at him and asked timidly, "I beg your pardon?"

"I'd like to relieve you of your other duties and put you with Anson full time. Would you like that?"

"Would I like . . . what will I do?"

"I want to communicate with him. He needs a vocabulary and he needs elementary instruction. He probably doesn't know how to hold a fork or blow his nose. I think you can do a good job of teaching him."



"Well, I—why, I'd love to!"

"Good. Good," he said like a department-store Santa Claus. "Just a few details. I'll want every minute on sound film, from white noise to white noise, and I'll want to review the film every day. And, of course, I'd have to ask you not to discuss this with anyone, on or off the staff. It's a unique case and a new therapy, and a lot depends on it. On you."

"Oh, you can depend on me, Doctor!"

He nodded agreement. "We'll start tomorrow morning. I'll have the first word-lists and other instructions ready for you by then. Meanwhile, I've got some research to do. Contact the Medical Information Service in Washington and have them key in Prince, Morton, and Personality, Multiple, on their Big Brain. I want abstracts of everything that has been published in the last fifty years on the subject. No duplicates. An index. Better order microfilm and send it by telefax, AA priority."

"Yes, Doctor," said Miss Jarrell eagerly. "Foreign publications too?"

"Everything any researcher has done. And put a Confidential on the order as well as the delivery."

"*Really* secret."

"Really." He concealed the smile which struggled to show itself; in his mind, he had seen the brief image of a little girl hiding jelly-beans. "And get me the nurses' duty-list. I have some juggling to do."

"Very well, Doctor. Is that all?"

"All for now."

She nearly skipped to the door. He saw a flash of white as she opened it; Miss Thomas was standing in the outer office. He could not have been more pleased if she had been there by his explicit orders, for Miss Jarrell said, as she went out, "And thank you, Doctor—thank you *very* much."

Chew on that, Thomas, he thought, feeling his own small vindictiveness and permitting himself to enjoy it for once.

And: Why am I jumping on Thomas?

Well, because I have to jump on somebody once in a while and she can take it.

Why don't I tell her everything? She has a good head.



Might have some really good ideas. Why not?

Why not? he asked again into a joyless void. Because I could be wrong. I could be so wrong. That's why not.

The research began, and the long night work. In addition to the vast amount of collateral reading—there was much more material published on the subject of multiple personality than he had realized—he had each day's film to analyze, notes to make, abstracts to prepare for computer-coding, and then, after prolonged thought, the next day's lessons to outline.

The rest of the clinic refused to stop and wait for this job to be done, and he had an additional weight of conscience as he concealed his impatience with everything else but the Newell case. He was so constituted that such a weight made him over-meticulous in the very things he wished to avoid, so that his ordinary work took more time rather than less.

As for the research, much of it was theory and argumentation; the subject, like reincarnation, seemed to attract zealots of the most positive and verbose varieties, both pro and con. Winnowing through the material, he isolated two papers of extreme interest to him. One was a theory, one an interim report on a series of experiments which had never been completed due to the death of the researcher.

The theory, advanced by one Weisbaden, was based on a search through just such material as this. Indeed, Weisbaden seemed to have been the only man besides himself who had ever asked the Medical Information Service for this complete package.

From it he had abstracted statistics, weighted them to suit his theory, and come up with the surprising opinion that multiple personality was a twinning phenomenon, and that if a method were found for diagnosing all such cases, a correspondence would be found between the incidence of multiple births and the incidence of multiple personalities. So many births per thousand are twins, so many per hundred thousand are triplets, and the odds with quads and quintts are in the millions.

So, too, said Weisbaden, would be the statistical expect-



tation for the multiple personality phenomenon, once such cases stopped being diagnosed as schizoids and other aberrates.

Weisbaden had not been a medical man—he was some sort of actuary—but his inference was fascinating. How many twins and triplets walked the Earth in single bodies, without any organic indication that they were not single entities? How many were getting treatment for conditions they did not have; how many Siamese twins were being penalized because they would not walk like other quadrupeds; how many separate entities were being forced to spend their lives in lockstep?

Some day, thought the doctor—as so many doctors have thought before—some day, when we can get closer to the genetic biologists, when psychology becomes a true science, when someone devises a cross-reference system between the disciplines which really works . . . and some day, when I have the time—well, maybe I could test this ingenious guess. But it's only a guess, based on neither observation nor experiment. Intriguing, though—if only it could be tested.

The other paper was of practical value. A certain Julius Marx—again not a medical man, but a design engineer with, apparently, hobbies—had built an electro-encephalograph for two (would anyone ever write a popular song about *that?*) which graphed each of the patients through a series of stimuli, and at the same time drew a third graph, a resultant.

Marx was after a means of determining brain-wave types, rather than individual specimens, and had done circuitry on machines which would handle up to eight people at once. In a footnote, with dry humor, he had qualified his paper for this particular category: "*Perhaps one day the improbable theories of Dr. Prince might approach impossibility through the use of this device upon a case of multiple personality.*"

Immediately on reading this, the doctor ordered EEGs on both Anson and Newell, and when he had both before him, he wished fervently that Julius Marx had been there with him; he suspected that the man enjoyed a good laugh,



even on himself. The graphs were as different as such graphs can possibly be.

The confirmation of his diagnosis was spectacular, and he left a note for Miss Jarrell to track down every multiple personality case he had rejected for the past eight years and see what could be done about some further tests. What would come after the tests, he did not know—yet.

The other valuable nudge he got from the Marx paper was the idea of a resultant between two dissimilar electro-encephalograms. He made one from the Newell-Anson EEGs—without the use of anything as Goldbergerian as Marx's complicated device, but with a simple computer coupling. He kept it in his top desk drawer, and every few days he would draw it out and he would wonder . . .

Therapy for Anson wasn't therapy. Back at the very beginning, Miss Thomas had said that his was a personality that wouldn't dismantle; she had been quite right. You can't get episodic material from an entity which has had no subjective awareness, no experience, which has no name, no sense of identity, no motility, no recall.

There were many parts to that strange radiance of Anson's and they were all in the eye of the beholder, who protected Anson because he was defenseless, who was continually amazed at his unself-consciousness as if it were an attribute rather than a lack. His discovery of the details of self and surroundings was a never-ending delight to watch, because he himself was delighted and had never known the cruel penalties we impose on expressed delight, nor the masking idioms we use instead: *Not a bad sunset there. Yeah. Real nice.*

"He's good," Miss Jarrell said to the doctor once. "He's only good—nothing else."

Therapy for Newell was, however, therapy, and not rewarding. The properly dismantled and segmented patient is relatively simple to handle.

Key in anger (1200 cycles) and demand "How old are you?" Since anger does not exist unsupported, an episode must emerge; the anger has an object, which existed at a time and place; and there's your episode. "I'm six," says



your patient. Key in the "You are six years old" note for reinforcement and you're all ready for significant recall. Or start with the age index: "You are twelve years old." When that is established, demand, "How do you feel?" and if there is significant material in the twelfth year, it will emerge. If it is fear, add the "fear" note and ask "Where are you?" and you'll have the whole story.

But not in Newell's case. There was, of course, plenty of conflict material, but somehow the conflicts seemed secondary; they were effects rather than causes. By far the largest category of traumas is the unjustified attack—a severe beating, a disease, a rejection. It is traumatic because, from the patient's point of view, it is unjustified. In Newell's case, there was plenty of suffering, plenty of defeat; yet in every single episode, he had earned it. So he was without guilt. His inner conviction was that his every cruelty was justified.

The doctor had an increasing sense that Newell had lived all his life in a books-balanced, debts-paid condition. His episodes had no continuity, one to the other. It was as if each episode occurred at right angles to the line of his existence; once encountered, it was past, like a mathematical point. The episodes were easy to locate, impossible to relate to one another and to the final product.

The doctor tried hard to treat Anson and Newell in his mind as discrete, totally unconnected individuals, but Miss Jarrell's sentimental remark kept echoing in his mind: "He's good; he's only good—nothing else," and generating an obverse to apply to Newell: *He's evil, he's only evil—nothing else.*

This infuriated him. How nice, how very nice, he told himself sarcastically, the spirits of good and evil to be joined together to make a whole man, and how tidily everything fits; black is totally black and white is white, and together the twain shall make gray. He found himself telling himself that it wasn't as simple as that, and things did not work out according to moral evaluations which were more arbitrary even than his assigned audio.

It was about this time that he began to doubt the rightness of his decision, the worth of his therapy, the possi-



bility of the results he wanted, and himself. And he had no one to advise him. He told that to Miss Thomas.

It was easy to do and it surprised both of them. He had called her in to arrange a daily EEG on both facets of the Newell case and explain about the resultant, which he also wanted daily. She said yes, Doctor, and very well, Doctor, and right away, Doctor, and a number of other absolutely correct things. But she didn't say why, Doctor? or that's good, Doctor, and suddenly he couldn't stand it.

He said, "Miss Thomas, we've got to bury the hatchet right now. I could be wrong about this case, and if I am, it's going to be bad. Worse than bad. That's not what bothers me," he added quickly, afraid she might interrupt, knowing that this must spill over or never emerge again. "I've been through bad things before and I can handle that part of it."

Then it came out, simple and astonishing to them both: "But I'm all alone with it, Tommie."

He had never called her that before, not even to himself, and he was overwhelmed with wonderment at where it might have come from.

Miss Thomas said, "No, you're not," gruffly.

"Well, hell," said the doctor, and then got all his control back. He dropped a film cartridge into the viewer and brought out his notes. Using them as index, he sat with his hand on the control, spinning past the more pedestrian material and showing her the highlights. He presented no interpretations while she watched and listened.

She heard Newell snarling, "You better watch what you're doing," and Anson pointing about the room, singing, "Floor, flower, book, bed, bubble. Window, wheel, wiggle, wonderful." (He had not known at that stage what a wonderful was, but Miss Jarrell said it almost every hour on the hour.) She saw Newell in recall, aged eleven, face contorted, raging at his fifth-grade teacher, "I'll bomb ya, y'ole bitch!" and at thirteen, coolly pleased at something best unmentioned concerning a kitten and a centrifuge.

She saw Anson standing in the middle of the room, left elbow in right hand, left thumb pressed to the point of his



chin, a stance affected by the doctor when in perplexity: "When I know everything there is to know," Anson had said soberly, "there'll be two Doctor Freds."

At this, Miss Thomas grunted and said, "You wouldn't want a higher compliment than that from anybody, anytime." The doctor shushed her, but kindly. The first time he had seen that sequence, it made his eyes sting. It still did. He said nothing.

She saw it all, right up to yesterday's viewing, with Newell in a thousand pieces from what appeared to be a separate jigsaw puzzle for each piece, and Anson a bright wonder, learning to read now, marveling at everything because everything was new—teaspoons and music and mountains, the Solar System and sandwiches and the smell of vanilla.

And as he watched, doors opened in the doctor's mind. They did not open wide, but enough for him to know that they were there and in which walls. How to describe the indescribable *feeling* of expertness?

It is said that a good truck driver has nerve-endings which extend to the bumper and tail light, tire tread to overhead. The virtuoso pianist does not will each separate spread and crook of each finger; he wills the notes and they appear.

The doctor had steered this course of impossible choices by such willing and such orientation; and again he felt it, the urge that *this* way is right now and *there* is the thing to do next. The miracle to him was not the feeling, but that it had come back to him while he watched the films and heard the tapes with Miss Thomas, who had said nothing, given no evaluation or advice. They were the same films he had studied, run in the same sequence. The difference was only in not being alone any more.

"Where are you going?" Miss Thomas asked him.

From the coat closet, he said, "File that material and lock it up, will you, Miss Thomas? I'll call you as soon as I return." He went to the door and smiled back at her. It hurt his face. "Thanks."

Miss Thomas opened her mouth to speak, but did not. She raised her right hand in a sort of salute and turned around to put the files away.



The doctor called from a booth near the Newell apartment. "Did I wake you, Osa? I'm sorry. Sometimes I don't know how late it gets."

"Who . . . Fred? Is that you, Fred?"

"Are you up to some painful conversation?"

Alarmed, she cried, "Is something the matter? Is Dick—"

He mentally kicked himself for his clumsiness. What other interpretation could she have put on such a remark? "He's okay. I'm sorry. I guess I'm not good at the light banter. . . . Can I see you?"

She paused for a long moment. He could hear her breathing. "I'll come out. Where are you?"

He told her.

She said, "There's a café just around the corner, to your left. Give me ten minutes."

He put up the phone and went to the corner. It was on a dingy street which seemed to be in hiding. On the street, the café hid. Inside the café, booths hid. In one of the booths, the doctor sat and was hidden. It was all he could do to keep himself from assuming a fetal posture.

A waiter came. He ordered collinses, made with light rum. He slumped then, with his forearms on the table and his chin on them, and watched bubbles rise in the drinks and collect on the underside of the shaved ice, until the glasses frosted too much for him to see. Then he closed his eyes and attempted to suspend thought, but he heard her footsteps and sprang up.

"Here I am," he said in a seal-like bark far louder than he had intended.

She sat opposite him. "Rum collins," she said, and only then did he remember that it had always been the drink they shared, when they had shared things. He demanded of himself, Now why did I have to do that? and answered, You know perfectly well why.

"Is he really all right?" she asked him.

"Yes, Osa. So far."

"I'm sorry." She turned her glass around, but did not lift it. "I mean maybe you don't want to talk about Dick."

"You're very thoughtful," he said, and wondered why it



had never occurred to him to see her just for himself. "But you're wrong. I did want you to talk about him."

"Well . . . if you like, Fred. What, especially?"

He laughed. "I don't know. Isn't that silly?"

He sipped his drink. He was aware that she did the same. They never used to say "cheers" or "skoal" or anything else, but they always took that first sip together.

He said, "I need something that segmentation or hypnosis or narcosynthesis just won't give me. I need to flesh out a skeleton. No, it's more refined than that. I need tints for a charcoal portrait." He lifted his hands and put them down again. "I don't know what I need. I'll tell you when I get it."

"Well, of course I'll help if I can," she said uncertainly.

"All right. Just talk, then. Try to forget who I am."

He met her eyes and the question there, and elaborated, "Forget I'm his therapist, Osa. I'm an interested stranger who has never seen him, and you're telling me about him."

"Engineering degree, and where he comes from, and how many sisters?"

"No," he said, "but keep that up. You're bound to stumble across what I want that way."

"Well, he's . . . he's been sick. I think I'd tell a stranger that."

"Good! What do you mean, sick?"

She glanced quickly at him and he could follow the thought behind it: *Why don't you tell ME how sick he is?* And then: *But you really want to play this game of the interested stranger. All right.*

She stopped looking at him and said, "Sick. He can't be steered by anything but his own—pressures, and they—they aren't the pressures he should have. Not for this world."

"Why do you suppose that is?"

"He just doesn't seem to care. No," she denied forcefully, "I don't mean that, not at all. It's more like—I think he would care if he—if he was allowed to, and he isn't allowed to." She got his eyes again. "This is very hard to do, Fred."

"I know and I'm sorry. But do go on; you're doing fine. What do you mean, he isn't allowed to care about the world and the way it wags? Who won't allow him?"



"It isn't a who; it's a—I don't know. You'd have a term for it. I'd call it a monster on his back, something that drives him to do things, be something he really isn't."

"We strangers don't have any terms for anything," he reminded her gently.

"That's a little refreshing," she said with a wan half-smile. "I like . . . mystified . . . people. They make me feel like one of the crowd. You know who's lucky?" she asked, her voice suddenly wild and strained and, by its tone, changing the subject. "Psychotics are lucky. The nuts, the real buggy ones. (I talk like this to layman strangers.) The ones who see butterflies all the time, the ones who think the President is after them."

"Lucky!" he exploded.

"Yes, lucky. They have a name for the beast that's chewing on them. Sometimes they can see it themselves."

"I don't quite—"

"I mean this," she said excitedly. "If I see grizzly bears under every lamp post, I'm *seeing* something. It has a name, a shape; I could draw a picture of it. If I do something irrational, the way some psychos do—run a nonexistent railroad or shoot invisible pheasants with an invisible gun, I'm *doing* something. I can describe it and say how it feels and write letters about it. See, these are all *things* plaguing the insane. Labels, handles. Things that *you* can hold up to reality to demonstrate that they don't coincide with it."

"And that's lucky?"

She nodded miserably. "A mere neurotic—Dick, for example—hasn't a *thing* he can name. He acts in ways we call irrational, and has a sense of values nobody can understand, and does things in a way that seems consistent to him but not to anyone else. It's as if there were a grizzly bear, after all, but we'd never heard of grizzly bears—what they are, what they want, how they act. He's driven by some monster without a name, something that no one can see and that even he is not aware of. That's what I mean."

"Ah."

They sat for minutes, silent and careful.

Then, "Osa—"



"Yes, Fred."

"Why do you love him?"

She looked at him. "You really meant it when you said this would be a painful conversation."

"Never mind that. Just tell me."

"I don't think it's a thing you can tell."

"Then try this: What is it you love in him?"

She made a helpless gesture. "Him."

He sat without responding until he knew she felt his dissatisfaction with the answer.

She frowned and then closed her eyes. "I couldn't make you understand, Fred. To understand, you'd have to be two things: a woman, and—Osa." Still he sat silent. Twice she looked up to his face and away, and at last yielded.

She said in a low voice, "It's a . . . tenderness you wouldn't believe, no matter how well you know him. It's a gentle, loving something that no one ever born ever had before and never will again. It's . . . I hate this, Fred!"

"Go on, for heaven's sake! This is exactly what I'm looking for."

"It is? Well, then . . . But I hate talking like this to you. It doesn't seem right."

"Go on!"

She said, almost in a whisper, "Life is plain hell sometimes. He's gone and I don't know where, and he comes back and it's just awful. Sometimes he acts as if he were alone in the place—he doesn't see me, doesn't answer. Or maybe he'll be the other way, after me every second, teasing and prodding and twisting every word until I don't know what I said or what I should say next, or who I am, or . . . anything, and he won't leave me alone, not to eat or to sleep or to go out. And then he—"

She stopped and the doctor waited, and this time realized that waiting would not be enough. "Don't stop," he said.

She shook her head.

"Please. It's impor—"

"I would, Fred," she burst out frantically. "I'm not refusing to. I *can't*, that's all. The words won't—"

"Don't try to tell me what it is, then," he suggested. "Just



say what happens and how it makes you feel. You can do that."

"I suppose so," she said, after considering it.

Osa took a deep breath, almost a sigh, and closed her eyes again.

"It will be hell," she said, "and then I'll look at him and he . . . and he . . . well, it's *there*, that's all. Not a word, not a sign sometimes, but the room is full of it. It's . . . it's something to love, yes, it's that, but nobody can just love something, one-way, forever. So it's a loving thing, too, from him to me. It suddenly arrives and everything else he is doing, the cruelty, the ignoring, whatever might be happening just then, it all stops and there's nothing else but the—whatever it is."

She wet her lips. "It can happen any time; there's never a sign or a warning. It can happen now, and again a minute from now, or not for months. It can last most of a day or flash by like a bird. Sometimes he goes on talking to me while it happens; sometimes what he actually says is just nothing, small-talk. Sometimes he just stands looking at me, without saying anything. Sometimes he—I'm sorry, Fred—he makes love to me then and that's . . . Oh, dear God, that's . . ."

"Here's my handkerchief."

"Thank you. He—does that other times, too, when there's nothing loving about it. This—this thing-to-love, it—it seems to have nothing to do with anything else, no pattern. It happens and it's what I wait for and what I look back on; it's all I have and all I want."

When he was quite sure she had no more to say, he hazarded, "It's as if some other—some other personality suddenly took over."

He was quite unprepared for her reaction. She literally shouted, "*No!*" and was startled herself.

She recoiled and glanced guiltily around the café. "I don't know why," she said, sounding frightened, "but that was just—just *awful*, what you said. Fred, if you can give any slightest credence to the idea of feminine intuition, you'll get that idea right out of your head. I couldn't begin to tell



you why, but it just isn't so. What loves me that way may be part of Dick, but it's Dick, not anybody or anything else. I *know* that's so, that's all. I know it."

Her gaze was so intense that it all but made him wince. He could see her trying and trying to find words, rejecting and trying again.

At last, "The only way I can say it that makes any sense to me is that Dick could be such a—a louse so much of the time and still walk a straight line without something just as extreme in the other direction. It's—it's a great pity for the rest of the world that he only shows that side to me, but there it is."

"Does he show it only to you?" He touched her hand and released it. "I'm sorry, but I must ask that."

She smiled and a kind of pride shone from her face. "Only to me. I suppose that's intuition again, but it's as certain as Sunday." The pride disappeared and was replaced by a patient agony. "I don't delude myself, Fred—he has other women; plenty of them. But that particular something is for me. It isn't something I wonder about. I just—know."

He sat back wearily.

She asked, "Is all this what you wanted?"

He gave her a quick, hurt glance and saw, to his horror, her eyes filling with tears.

"It's what I asked for," he said in a flat voice.

"I see the difference." She used his handkerchief. "May I have this?"

"You can have—" But he stopped himself. "Sure." He got up. "No," he said, and took the damp handkerchief out of her hand. "I'll have something better for you."

"Fred," she said, distressed, "I—"

"I'm going, forgive me and all that," he said, far more angrily than he had thought he would. But polite talk and farewells were much more than he could stand. "The layman stranger has to have a long interview with a professional acquaintance. I don't think I'd better see you again, Osa."

"All right, Fred," she said to his back.

He had hurt her, he knew, but he knew also that his



stature in her cosmos could overshadow the hurt and a hundred more like it. He luxuriated in the privilege and stamped out, throwing a bill to the waiter on the way.

He drove back and plodded up the ramp to the clinic. For some obscure reason, the inscription over the door caught his attention. He had passed it hundreds of times without a glance; he had ordered it put there and he was satisfied with it, and why should it matter now? But it did. What was it that Newell had said about it? *Some saw about the sanctity of personality.* A very perceptive remark, thought the doctor, considering that Newell hadn't read it:

### ONLY MAN CAN FATHOM MAN

It was from Robert Lindner and was the doctor's answer to the inevitable charges of "push-button therapy." But he wondered now if the word "Man" was really inclusive enough.

He shook off the conjecture and let himself into the building.

Light gleamed from the translucent door of his office at the far end of the corridor. He walked down the slick flooring toward it, listening to his heels and not thinking otherwise, his mind as purposively relaxed as a fighter's body between rounds. He opened the door.

"What are you doing?"

"Waiting," said Miss Thomas.

"Why?"

"Just in case."

Without answering, he went to the closet and hung up his coat. Back at his desk, he sat down and straightened his tired spine until it crackled. Then he looked at Miss Thomas in the big chair. She put her feet under her and he understood that she was ready to leave if he wished her to.

He said, "Hypothesis: Newell and Anson are discrete personalities."

While he spoke, he noticed Miss Thomas's feet move outward a little and then cross at the ankles. His inner thought was, Of all the things I like about this woman, the best is the amount of conversation I have with her without talking.



"And we have plenty of data to back that up," he continued. "The EEGs alone prove it. Anson is Anson and Newell is Newell, and to prove it, we've crystallized them for anyone to see. We've done such a job on them that we know exactly what Anson is like without Newell. We've built him up that way, with that in mind. We haven't done quite the same with Newell, but we might as well have. I mean we've investigated Newell as if Anson did not exist within him. What it amounts to is this: In order to demonstrate a specimen of multiple personality, we've separated and isolated the components.

"Then we go into a flat spin because neither segment looks like a real human being . . . Miss Thomas?"

"Yes?"

"Do you mind the way I keep on saying 'we'?"

She smiled and shook her head. "Not at the moment."

"Further," he said, answering her smile but relentlessly pursuing his summation, "we've taken our two personalities and treated each like a potentially salvable patient—one neurotic, one retarded. We've operated under the assumption that each contained his own disorder and could be treated by separate therapies."

"We've been wrong?"

"I certainly have," said the doctor. He slapped the file cabinet at his left. "In here there's a very interesting paper by one Weisbaden, who theorizes that multiple personalities are actually twins, identical twins born of the same egg-cell and developing within one body. One step, as it were, into the microcosm from *foetus in foetu*."

"I've read about that," said Miss Thomas. "One twin born enclosed in the body of another."

"But not just partly—altogether enclosed. Whether or not Weisbaden's right, it's worth using as a test hypothesis. That's what I've been doing, among other things, and I've had my nose stuck so far into it that I wasn't able to see a very important corresponding part of the analogy: namely, that twinning itself is an anomaly, and any deviation in a sibling of multiple origin is teratological."

"My," said Miss Thomas in mock admiration.



The doctor smiled. "I should have said 'monstrous,' but why drag in superstitions? This thing is bad enough already. Anyway, if we're to carry our twinning idea as an analogy, we have got to include the very likely possibility that our multiple personalities are as abnormal as Siamese twins or any other monstrosity—I *hate* to use that word!"

"I'm not horrified," said Miss Thomas. "Abnormal in what way?"

"Well, in the crudest possible terms, what would you say was the abnormality suffered by one Siamese twin?"

"The other Siamese twin."

"Mmm. And by the same analogy, what's the name of Newell's disorder?"

"My goodness!" gasped Miss Thomas. "We better not tell Hildy Jarrell."

"That isn't the only thing we'll have to keep from her—for a while, at least," said the doctor. "Listen: did you run my notes on Newell?"

"All of them."

"You remember the remark she made that bothered me, about Anson's being only and altogether good, and the trouble I had with the implication that Newell was only and altogether bad?"

"I remember it."

"It's a piece of childishness that annoys me wherever I find it and I was damned annoyed to be thinking at all along those lines. The one reason for its being in the notes at all is that I had to decant it somewhere. Well, I've been eu-chred, Miss Thomas. Because Anson appeared in our midst shining and unsullied, I've leaned over backward trying to keep away from him the corruptions of anger, fear, greed, concupiscence and all the other hobbies of real mankind. By the same token, it never occurred to me to analyze what kindness, generosity, sympathy or empathy might be lurking in Newell. Why bother in such a—what was the term you used?"

"Heel," said Miss Thomas without hesitation.

"Heel. So what we have to do first is to give each of these—uh—people the privilege of entirety. If they are mon-



sters, then let us at least permit them to be whole monsters."

"You don't mean you'll—"

"We," he corrected, smiling.

She said, through her answering smile, "You don't mean we'll take poor Anson and—"

He nodded.

"Offhand, I don't see how you're going to do it, Doctor. Anson has no fear. He'd laugh as he walked into a lion's cage or a high-tension line. And I can't imagine how you'd make him angry. You of all people. He—he loves you. As for . . . oh, dear. This is awful."

"Extremes are awful," he agreed. "We'll have to get pretty basic, but we can do it. Hence, I suggest Miss Jarrell be sent to Kalamazoo for a new stove or some such."

"And then what?"

"It is standard practice to acquaint a patient with the name and nature of his disorder. In our field, we don't tell him, we show him, and when he absorbs the information, we call it an insight. Anson, meet Newell. Newell, meet Anson."

"I do hope they'll be friends," said Miss Thomas unhappily.

In a darkness within a darkness in the dark, Anson slept his new kind of sleep, wherein he now had dreams. And then there was his own music, the deep sound which lit the darkness and pierced the dark envelopes, one within the other; and now he could emerge to the light and laughter and the heady mysteries of life and communication with Miss Hildy and Doctor Fred, and the wonder on wonder of perception. Gladly he flung himself back to life to—

But this wasn't the same. He was here, in the bed, but it wasn't the same at all. There was no rim of light around the ceiling, no bars of gold pouring in a sunlit window; this was the same, but not the same—it was dark. He blinked his eyes so hard he made little colored lights, but they were inside his eyes and did not count.

There was noise, unheard-of, unbearable noise in the form of a cymbal-crash right by his head in the dark. He recoiled from it and tried to bounce up and run, and found



he could not move. His arms were bound to his sides, his legs to the bed, by some wide formless something which held him trapped. He fought against it, crying, and then the bed dropped away underneath him and stopped with a crash, and rose and dropped again. There was another noise—not a noise, though it struck at him like one: this was a photo-flash, though he could not know it.

Blinded and sick, he lay in terror, waiting for terror again.

He heard a voice say softly, "Turn down the gain," and his music, his note, the pervasive background to all his consciousness, began to weaken. He strained toward it and it receded from him. Thumpings and shufflings from somewhere in the dark threatened to hide it away from him altogether. He felt, without words, that the note was his life and that he was losing it. For the first time in his conscious life, he became consciously afraid of dying.

He screamed, and screamed again, and then there was a blackness blacker than the dark and it all ceased.

"He's fainted. Lights, please. Turn off that note. Give him 550 and we'll see if he can sleep normally. God, I hope we didn't go too far."

They stood watching the patient. They were panting with tension.

"Help me with this," said the doctor. Together, he and Miss Thomas unbuckled the restraining sheet. They cleared away the flash-gun, the cymbals, and readjusted the bed-raising control to its normal slow operation.

"He's all right, physically anyway," said the doctor after a swift examination. "I told you it would work if we got basic enough. He wouldn't fear a lion because he doesn't know what a lion is. But restraint and sudden noise and falling—he doesn't have to know what they are. Okay, button him up again."

"What? You're not going to—"

"Come on, button him up," he said brusquely.

She frowned, but she helped him replace the restraining sheet. "I still think—" she began, and earned a "Sh!"

He set up the 200-cycle note again at its usual amplitude and they waited. There was a lag in apparent consciousness



this time. The doctor realized that the patient was awake, but apparently afraid to open his eyes.

"Anson . . ."

Anson began to cry weakly.

"What's the matter, Anson?"

"D-Doctor Fred, Doctor Fred . . . the big noise, and then I couldn't move and all the black and white smash lights." He wept again.

The doctor said nothing. He simply waited. Anson's sobs stopped abruptly and he tried to move. He gasped loudly and tried again.

"Doctor Fred!" he cried in panic.

Still the doctor said nothing.

Anson rolled his head wildly, fell back, tried again. "Make it so I can get up," Anson called piteously.

"No," said the doctor flatly.

"Make so I—"

"No."

Piercingly, Anson shrieked. He surged upward so powerfully that for a second the doctor was afraid for the fastenings on the restraining sheet. But they held.

For nearly ten minutes, Anson fought the sheet, screaming and drooling. Fright turned to fury, and fury to an intense, witless battle. It was a childish tantrum magnified by the strength and staying power of an adult.

At about the second minute, the doctor keyed in a supplementary frequency, a shrill 10,500 cycles which had been blank on the index. Whenever Anson paused for breath, the doctor intoned, "You are angry. You are angry." Grimly he watched until, a matter of seconds before the patient had to break, he released him to sleep.

"I couldn't stand another minute of that," said Miss Thomas. Her lips were almost gray. She moistened a towel and gently bathed the sleeping face. "I didn't like that at all."

"You'll like the rest of it," promised the doctor. "Let's get rid of this sheet."

They took it off and stored it.

"How'd you like me to hit the ten-five cycles with that sheet off?" he asked.



"Build him a cage first," she breathed in an awed tone.

He grinned suddenly. "Hit eighty cycles for me, will you?"

She did and they watched Richard Newell wakening. He groaned and moved his head gingerly. He sat up suddenly and yelped, and covered his face for a moment with both hands.

"Hello, Newell. How do you feel?"

"Fred! What've you been *doing* to me?"

"How do you feel?"

"Like the output of a garbage disposal unit. I haven't felt like this since the day I rowed a boat for fourteen hours."

"It's all right, Newell. All in a day's work."

"Work is right. I know—you've had me out pulling a plow while I was hypnotized. Slave labor. Lowers the overhead. Damn it, Fred, I'm not going to take much more of this."

"You'll take as much as I choose to give you," snapped the doctor, "This is my party now, Dicky-boy."

Miss Thomas gasped. Newell slowly swung his legs out and sat looking at the doctor, an ominous and ugly half-smile on his face.

"Miss Thomas," said the doctor, "ten-five, please."

With his amusement deeply concealed, he watched Miss Thomas sidle to the controls and dial for the 10,500 supplementary note. He knew exactly what was going on in her mind. Ten-five was a fury motif, the command to Anson to relieve the state of unbearable anger he had been in just moments ago.

"Miss Thomas," said Newell silkily, "did I ever tell you the story of my life? Or, for that matter, the story of the doctor's life?"

"Why—no, Mr. Newell."

"Once upon a time," said Newell, "there was a doctor who . . . who . . ." As the shrill note added itself to the bumble of the 80-cycle tone, Newell's voice faltered. Behind him, the doctor heard the rustle of Miss Thomas's starch as she braced herself.

Newell looked at the doctor with astonishment. "What the hell am I up to?" he murmured. "That isn't a funny story.



'Scuse me, Miss Thomas." He visibly relaxed, swung his feet back up on the bed and rested on one elbow. "I haven't felt like this since . . . Where's Osa?" he asked.

"Home. Waiting for you."

"God. Hope she doesn't have to wait much longer. Is she all right?"

"She's fine. So are you, pretty near. I think we have the thing whipped. Like to hear about it?"

"'Talk about me,'" Newell quoted. "'Talk nice if you can, but talk about me.'"

The doctor saw Miss Thomas staring incredulously at the controls, checking to be sure she had keyed the right note. He laughed. Newell laughed with him; it was one of the most pleasant of imaginable sounds. And it wasn't Anson's laugh, either—not even remotely. This was Richard Newell to the life, but warm, responsive, considerate.

The doctor said, "Did Osa ever tell you she thought you had a nameless monster pushing you around?"

"Only a couple hundred times."

"Well, you have. I'm not joking, Dick—you really have. Only you've never suspected it and you don't have a name to call it by."

"I don't get you." He was curious, anxious to learn, to like and be liked. It was in the way he spoke, moved, listened. Miss Thomas stood with her hand frozen near the controls, ready to shut him off at the first sign of expected violence.

"You will. Now here's the picture." And in simple terms, the doctor told him the story of Anson, the theory of multiple personality as a phenomenon of twinning, and at last his theory of the acrobatic stabilization the two entities had achieved on their own.

"Why acrobatic?" asked Newell.

"You know you act like a heel most of the time, Dick."

"You might say so." It was said quite without resentment.

"Here's why. (Just listen, now; you can test it any way you like after you've heard it all.) Your alter ego (to coin a phrase) has been walled in, excluded from consciousness and expression and even self-awareness, ever since you were



born. I won't attempt to explain that; I don't know. Anyway, there it lay, isolated but alive, Dick, alive—and just as strong as you!"

"I . . . can't picture such a thing."

"It isn't easy. I can't either, completely. It's like trying to get into the mind of another species, or a plant, if you can imagine such a thing. I do know, though, that the thing is alive, and up until recently had nothing—no knowledge, no retained experience, no mode of expression at all."

"How do you know it's there, then?"

"It's there all right," said the doctor. "And right this very minute, it's blowing its top. You see, all your life it's lived with you. It has had a blind, constant urge to break through, and it never could make it until it popped up here and we drew it out. It's a fascinating entity, Dick. I won't go into that now; you'll know it—him—thoroughly before you leave. But believe it or not, it's pretty nice. More than nice: it's positively angelic. It's lain there in the dark all these years like a germinated seed, pushing up toward the light. And every time it came near—you batted it down again."

"I did?"

"For good sound survival reasons, you did. But like a lot of survival impulses, yours was pretty irrational. A lion roars, a deer runs. Good survival. But if he runs over a cliff? What I'm getting at is that there's room for both of you in Richard Anson Newell. You've co-existed fairly well, considering, as strangers and sometime enemies. You're going to do a lot better as friends and partners. Brothers, if you want the true term, because that's just what the two of you are."

"How does this—if true—explain the way I've been mucking around with my life?"

Looking for an image, the doctor paused. "You might say you've been *cantilevered* out from a common center. Way out. Now your alter—we call him Anson—is, as I've said, a very nice fellow. His blind strugglings have been almost all toward something—call it an aura, if you like—in people around you. The pressures are everything that's warm and lovable and good to be with.



"But you—man, you felt invaded! You could never reach out toward anything; Anson was there ahead of you, pressing and groping. You had to react, immediately and with all your might, *in the opposite direction*. Isn't it true that all your life you've rejected and tramped on anything that attracted you—and at the same time you've taken only things you couldn't really care about?"

"Well, I . . ."

"Just hold onto the idea. This speech I'm making is for your intellectual understanding; I don't expect you to buy it first crack out of the barrel."

"But I haven't always . . . I mean what about Osa? Are you telling me I didn't really want Osa?"

"That's the cantilever effect, Dick. Anson never felt about Osa the way you did. I think she must have some confining effect on him; he doesn't like to be confined, does he, Miss Thomas?" He chuckled. "She either leaves him cold or makes him angry. So angry that it's beyond belief. But it's an infant's anger, Dick—blind and furious and extreme. And what happens *then*, when you react in the *opposite* direction?"

"Oh, my God," breathed Newell. "Osa . . ." He turned his suddenly illuminated gaze up. "You know, sometimes I—we—it's like a big light that . . ."

"I know, I know," said the doctor testily. "Matter of fact, that's happening right now. Turn off the ten-five, please, Miss Thomas."

"Yes, Doctor."

"That high note," the doctor explained. "It's for Anson—induced anger. You're being pretty decent at the moment, Newell. You realize that?"

"Well, why wouldn't I? You've done a lot for me."

The note faded. Newell closed his eyes and opened them again. There was a long, tense silence.

Finally Newell said in his most softly insulting tone, "You spin a pretty tale, Freddy-boy. But I'm tired of listening. Shall I blackmail you the hell out of here?"

"Five-fifty, Miss Thomas."

"Yes, Doctor." She turned Newell off.



Back in the office again, Miss Thomas jittered in indecision. She tried to speak and then looked at the doctor with mute pleading.

"Go ahead," he encouraged.

She shook her head. "I don't know what comes next. Morton Prince was wrong; there are no multiple egos, just multiple siblings sharing the same body, the same brain." She halted, waiting for him to take it from there.

"Well?" he said.

"I know you're not going to sacrifice one for the other; that's why you never handled these cases before. But"—she flapped her hands helplessly—"even if Newell could carry the equipment around, I'd never sleep nights, thinking that Anson had to go through the agony of that ten-five note just so Newell would be a decent human being. Or even, for that matter, vice versa."

"It wouldn't be either humane or practical," he said. "Well?"

"Do they take turns being dominant, one day on, one day off?"

"That still would be sacrificing each half the time."

"Then what? You said it would be 'Newell, meet Anson. Anson, meet Newell.' But you don't have the same problem you'd have with Siamese twins or the same solution."

"Which is?"

"Separating them without killing either one. All these two have is a single brain to share and a single body. If you could cut them free—"

"I can't," he said bluntly. "I don't intend to."

"All right," she conceded in defeat. "You're the doctor. You tell me."

"Just what you said—the Morton Prince cases were in communication."

"And Newell and Anson are, just because we gave Anson a vocabulary? What about that cantilever effect you explained to Newell? You can't let them go through life counterbalancing each other—Newell pulling violently to the other side of Anson's reactions, Anson doing the same with Newell's. Then *what*?" she repeated almost angrily. "If you



know, why put me through this guessing game?"

"To see if you'd come up with the same answer," he said candidly. "A check on my judgment. Do you mind?"

She shook her head again, but this time with a little complimentary smile. "It's a painful way to get co-operation, only it works, damn you." She frowned then, considering. "The two of them are compartmented. Are they different in that way from the other multiples?"

"Some, yes—the ones that are detected because there is communication. But not the others. And those cases rate treatment (because all people in difficulty do) and Newell-Anson, if we work it out properly, will show us how to help them. There's an obvious answer, Miss Thomas. I'm hoping—almost desperately—that you come up with the one I thought of."

She made a self-impatient gesture. "*Not* the psychostat. *Definitely* not eliminating one or the other. *Not* making them take turns." She looked up with a questioning awe on her face. "The *opposite* of treating Siamese twins?"

"Like what?" he asked urgently, leaning forward.

"Don't separate them. *Join* them. Make a juncture."

"Keep going," he pressed. "Don't stop now."

"Surgical?"

"Can't be done. It isn't one lobe for Newell, the other for Anson, or anything that simple. What else?"

She thought deeply, began several times to say something, dismissed each intended suggestion with a curt head-shake. He waited with equally deep intensity.

She nodded at last. "Modulate them separately." She was no longer asking. "Then modulate them in relation to each other so they won't be in that awful cantilever balancing act."

"Say it!" he nearly yelled.

"But that isn't enough."

"No!"

"Audio response."

"Why?" he rapped out. "And which?"

"Sixty cycles—the AC tone they'll be hearing almost all the time. Assign it to communication between them."



The doctor slumped into a chair, drained of tension. He nodded at her, with the tiredest grin she had ever seen.

"All of it," he whispered. "You got everything I thought of . . . including the 60 cycles. I knew I was right. Now I *know* it. Or doesn't that make sense?"

"Of course it does."

"Then let's get started."

"Now?" she asked, astonished. "You're too tired—"

"Am I?" He jacked himself out of the chair. "Try stopping me and see."

They used the EEG resultants, made two analogs and another, and used all three as the optimum standard for the final fixing process in the psychostat. It was a longer, more meticulous process than it had ever been and it worked; and what shook the doctor's hand that last day was an unbelievable blend—all of Newell's smoothness and a new strength, the sum of powers he had previously exhausted in the dual struggle that neither had known of; and, with it, Anson's bright fascination with the very act of drawing breath, seeing colors, finding wonderment in everything.

"We're nice guys," said Richard Anson Newell, still shaking the doctor's hand. "We'll get along great."

"I don't doubt it a bit," the doctor said. "Give my best to Osa. Tell her . . . here's something a little better than a wet handkerchief."

"Whatever you say," said Richard Anson Newell.

He waved to Miss Thomas, who watched from the corridor, and behind her, Hildy Jarrell, who wept, and he went down the steps to the street.

"We're making a mistake, Doctor," said Miss Thomas, "letting him—them—go."

"Why?" he asked, curious.

"All that brain power packed in one skull . . ."

The doctor wanted to laugh. He didn't. "You'd think so, wouldn't you?" he agreed.

"Meaning it's not so at all," she said suspiciously. "Why not?"

"Because it isn't *twice* the amount of brains any indi-



vidual has. It's only as much as any *two* distinct individuals have. Like you and me, for instance. Mostly we supplement each other—but just here and there, not everywhere, adding up to a giant double brain. Same with Newell and Anson. And any two people can be counted on to jam one another occasionally. So will they—but not like before treatment.”

They watched until Richard Anson Newell was out of sight, then went back to check the multiple personality cases that Miss Jarrell had dug out of the files.

Four months later, the doctor got a letter:

*Dear Fred,*

*I'll write this because it will do me good to get it off my chest. If it doesn't do enough good, I'll send it. If that doesn't help, I don't know what I'll do. Yes, I do. Nothing.*

*Dick is . . . incredible. He takes care of me, Fred, in ways I'd never dreamed of or hoped for. He cares. That's it, he cares—about me, about his work. He learns new things all the time and loves old things over again. It's . . . could I say miracle?*

*But, Fred—this is hateful of me, I know—the thing I told you about, the thing I used to wish for and live to remember, no matter what . . . it's gone. That's probably good, because of what happened between times.*

*But sometimes I'd trade my perfect husband for that louse and a wet handkerchief, if I could have the other thing along with it somehow.*

*There, I've said it.*

*Osa*

The doctor galloped through the clinic until he found his head technician in the electrical lab.

“Tommie,” he said jovially, “did you ever go out and get drunk with a doctor?”

The tears were streaming down his face. Miss Thomas went out and got drunk with the doctor.



# THE DAMNEDEST THING

by Garson Kanin

It may have occurred to you (even before the excursion with flashbulbs and amplifiers into the darkest interior of "The Other Man") that the psychiatric profession is one requiring considerable poise and equanimity. But have you ever *really* thought of what it takes to be an undertaker?

Garson Kanin, the celebrated actor-director-playwright, herewith presents a homey scene in the life of one of the unsung heroes whose work begins where the doctor's ends.

THE UNDERTAKER came home early. He kissed his wife, then went upstairs to wash up for supper. When he came down, *she* kissed *him*.

"Be five, six minutes," she said. "Legga lamb."

"Okay. I'll get me a drink," said the undertaker.

"And boiled leeks," she added, before returning to the kitchen.

The undertaker went into the sitting room and sat. Beside his chair, on a large end table, lay a copy of the evening paper. Beside it stood a nearly full bottle of whisky and a tumbler. He put the paper on his lap and smiled at the bottle as he would at a friend.

"Boy, oh, boy," he mumbled. He reached out and grasped the bottle firmly by its neck, keeping his thumb on the cork. He turned the bottle upside down once, then uncorked it. Next, he slowly decanted about two inches of liquor into the tumbler, corked the bottle, set it down, picked up the tumbler and drained it. He then put his nose into the empty glass and took one deep breath. Finally he put the glass beside the bottle and picked up his paper. His face was without



expression as he scanned the top half of the front page, but when he flipped the paper over to look at the bottom half, a small headline took his attention, and he said to it, quietly, "You don' say so!"

He returned the paper to his lap, reached out and grasped the bottle firmly by its neck, keeping his thumb on the cork. He turned the bottle upside down once, then uncorked it. Next, he slowly decanted about four inches of liquor into the tumbler, corked the bottle, set it down, picked up the tumbler and drained it. He then put his nose into the empty glass and took one deep breath. Finally he put the glass beside the bottle and picked up his paper. As he did so, his wife appeared in the archway which led to the dining room.

"Let's go," she said. "Everything's on."

"Right there," he replied, and made his way to his place at the table. His wife was already seated at hers, piling food onto her plate. He reached to the platter of lamb and served himself, meagerly.

His wife bristled. "What's the matter? Against lamb?"

"No."

"Then so what?"

"I think I just killed off my whole appetite."

"Why?"

"I didn't mean it, only I did. With an extry slug of whisky."

"What'd you want t'do *that* for?"

"I didn't *want*, I just *did*. A double slug, if you want the truth."

"You'da told me in time, I coulda saved myself in the kitchen, Arthur. Far as I'm personally concerned, delicatessen suits me as soon as lamb."

"I didn't know I was going to."

"How about tomorrow *you* cook a legga lamb and *I'll* get crocked an' not eat? Why not?"

"Don' make a situation, Rhoda. I said I'm sorry."

"When? I didn' hear no sorry."

"All right, I'm saying it now. Sorry."

"You're welcome."

They ate in silence, until Arthur ended it. "Good piece of



meat. Gristede's?"

"A lot you know. Drunk."

He put down his fork. "Rhoda, I want to assure you this much. That I'm not drunk. Far from it. In fact, I wish we had the habit of a glass of wine with meals. Red, white, I don't know which it is you're supposed to with lamb. But in the store, they prob'ly give a free booklet. It's a nice habit to have. Very civilized. In many countries they wouldn't think of without it. And got nothing to do with drunk in any way, shape, manner or form." He picked up his fork and resumed the meal.

"If I knew what's got into you all of a sudden," said Rhoda, "I would be happy. I'm always telling how at least you, whatever faults you got, don't make a pig of yourself when it comes to alcoholic beverage. You've always been strictly moderation. Practice and preach."

"I'm *still*."

"So what's all this extry slugs and you want suddenly wine in addition?"

"The wine I just happened to mention. A civilized habit."

"An' the extry slugs?"

"*Slug*, not *slugs*."

"So *slug*?"

"That's something else again."

"*What* else again?"

"Rhoda, if you knew the thing happened to me today, you absolutely wouldn't begrudge me."

"I don't begrudge, Arthur. I like you to have anything in the world if you want it. Only I worry if I see you turning into like Gunderson over there with nothing in his stomach only rye whisky and prunes for a year an' two months, Mrs. Gunderson tells me." She munched her food sadly.

"Rhoda, I advise you put your mind at rest. With all my faults, as you mentioned—an' one of these days, by the way, if I get the time I appreciate you telling me just what you call faults; not now, though—one of them is not I'm alcoholic or even nearly. The wine talk was one thing, just a topic of conversation, figure of speech, y'might say. The other thing, the extry slug—not *slugs*, *slug*—this is something else again.



This I admit to, in fact, brought up myself. An' the reason was what happened to me today down to the place. When I tell you, if I tell you, you will definitely not begrudge me. In fact, take a slug yourself, I wouldn' be surprised. Only I don' know should I tell you."

"Tell, don' tell," chanted Rhoda.

"It was the damneDEST thing ever happened to me in my entire life. In fact, *God* damneDEST," said the undertaker.

"Eat your meat."

"Rhoda, listen. Because this is it." He took a breath and swallowed before continuing. "I had an argument with a corpse today."

"Eat a few vegetables, at least, if not meat."

"Did you hear what I just told?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's more. Not only I had this argument with this corpse, but I *lost* the argument, what's more."

"The feature goes on 7:10," replied Rhoda. "But if you wanna catch the newsreel an' cartoon, then ten *to*."

"I just as soon."

"All right, then, don't dawdle. Salad?"

"Yes. Look, I can't seem to put my point over. Oh! You think I'm affected by the—but no, Rhoda. I take an oath, I raise my hand. I know what I'm talking of and this is the God's truth what I'm on the verge to tell you."

"All right, Arthur. But eat meanwhile."

"Now the stiff I had the run-in with, the corpse, is Stanton C. Baravale. Was."

"The department store."

"That's him. Last night he died, in the private wing of Summit General. 10:53 P.M."

"I read it, yes."

"This morning they brought him in early; in fact, they were waiting out front when I got there."

"Because you got a late start, I told you. You wanna watch that."

"You're one hundred per cent wrong, Rhoda, but I got no time to argue because I don' want to lose my thread. So they brought him in and we laid him out careful in the big room,



and just about we were getting ready to go to work, Thor says to me, 'Mr. Roos, could I be excused?' "

"I like to see you excuse him for good," said Rhoda. "That dope."

"No, he's a good boy. But he says further, 'I slammed out with no breakfast an' I like to go to the Whelan's get a bite to eat.' 'Go ahead,' I says, 'only I hope no trouble home.' So Thor tells me how again his mother starts on him regarding learning the embalming game. How it makes her nervous he's an embalmer's apprentice. Some people!"

"How'd she like it there was *nobody* doin' the type work?"

"The very point I made to Thor, darling."

"An' what'd *he* say?"

"That it was the very point he made to *her*."

"I should think so, f'God's sake!"

"Anyway, he goes to the Whelan's, an' I start in gettin' the stuff prepared. An' I was whistling, I remember well, because I was whistling 'There Is Nothing Like a Dame' an' I was havin' trouble to recall the middle part which slipped my mind."

"Ta da da *da* da da *da*!" sang Rhoda, helpfully.

"Yes, I know. It came to me later. But while I was whistling, I heard this noise. Like the clearing of a throat. Well, I turned."

"An' what was it?" asked Rhoda, interested for the first time.

"It was the clearing of a throat."

"What're you saying, Arthur?"

"I'm saying that Stanton C. Baravale was sitting up, looking terrible sick."

"Why shouldn't he if he was dead?"

"Wait a second, Rhoda. Let me get on with it. The man sat there an' he looks at me, then he looks around, then to me, then he says—but soft, he was so soft I could hardly hear 'im. Like this. He says, 'Who're you?' "

Rhoda stacked their plates, pushed them aside, pulled the pie tin toward her and began cutting it, carefully.

"Arthur, are you telling the truth?"

"As God is my judge."



"Then go ahead," said Rhoda. "Only speak up while I get the coffee off."

"In twenty-eight years," shouted Arthur, "it's happened to me twice only. The other time, you remember, the Winkleman boy how he came to in the shop an' it was in all the papers, an' he's still around, I believe. Since nineteen twenty-eight."

Rhoda returned with the coffee-pot, sat down and poured two cups.

"He's still around," she said, "and a very mean job he turned out. All the time in trouble."

"So when Stanton C. Baravale said, 'Who're you?' like that, I told him. Naturally. An' where he was an' he asks me how come. So I said, 'Well, the fact is, Mr. Baravale, you died last night. 10:53 P.M.' 'I knew it must be *something* like that,' he says. 'I feel light as a feather. An' cold, too,' he says. 'I must have a temperature of below zero.' So I says, 'You just relax, sir, an' I'll get Summit General on the phone in one second.' 'Don't do that,' he says. 'It'll just cause talk, an' I'm goin' out again in a minute.'"

"Think of that," said Rhoda, sipping her boiling coffee.

"Darling," continued the undertaker, "I want to tell you, I just stood there. I was in a state of shock. Next thing, he was talkin' again. 'What was it?' he says, still whisperin', y'know. 'There was something worryin' me I didn't settle, that's why I came back. I know,' he says, a little louder. 'You!' "

"You?" echoed Rhoda.

"That's it. He says to me how like a fool he never specified any burial details, an' just left it general. That it was the last thing he was thinkin' about before he went off, an' some kind of leftover power in his brain must've brought him back for long enough."

"Arthur, I don't begrudge you that extry slug. Not for one moment."

"'Now then,' he says to me, 'what's it going to cost?' 'I really couldn't say,' I says. 'You better,' he says. 'The way that fool Immerman drew the damn thing it reads "after all funeral expenses have been paid," and so forth. Well, hell,'



he says, 'that can mean *anything*. Moment like this, my kids feel bad, they're bound to spend more'n is necessary and what's the sense to that? Now what's the cheapest?' he says. 'All depends,' I answer him, 'how many persons, cars, music or no, casket.' At this he leans on his elbow an' he says, 'Six people, one car, no music, cheapest box you carry.' So I says, 'But what if the instructions I get—' He never let me finish. 'God damn it,' he says. 'Give me some paper an' pen'n ink.' I give it him, he writes a page, then he says, 'You have any trouble, show that!' Well, Rhoda, by this time I was comin' to *myself* a little more. An' I says, 'Please let me use the phone.' 'No,' he says, 'just give me your gentleman's word you'll handle it my way.' 'But, look,' I says, 'this paper's no good. You're legally dead as of 10:53 P.M. last night. 'That's why I put last week's date on,' he says. 'An' it's in my handwriting, no mistake about that.' Then he says to me, 'What's the time *now*?' 'Eight thirteen A.M.,' I says. 'Well, let's make it 8:15, officially,' he says, and lays down again and says the date. 'January five, nineteen fifty-six,' he says. 'Thank you, Mr. Roos,' he says. 'Been nice talkin' to you.' An' then, Rhoda, he just by God went out!"

"Well, I never," said Rhoda. "Gimme a hand here, will you, Arthur, please?"

Together they cleared the table, replaced the lace centerpiece and the wax-fruit bowl. In the kitchen, he washed, she dried. They worked for a time with swift efficiency, without speaking. Finally Rhoda asked, "What're you goin' t'do?"

"Y'got me there, dear."

"You mentioned to anyone? Thor?"

"Not yet, no."

"They ordered up anything yet?"

"Doggone right. Man brought a letter from the lawyer's place. Big chapel, minimum three hundred guests. Organ *and* string trio. Thirty cars. Canopy and chairs. Memorial reception after, main hall. Organ *and* string trio. Refreshments. Rhoda, one of the biggest things we've ever handled. I mean it's between seven, eight hundred clear profit no matter how you look."

"You got the page he wrote there?"



"Right here," said Arthur.

"Lemme have a look it."

"Wait'll I wipe my hands here." Having dried his hands, he took the paper from his breast pocket and handed it to his wife.

She read it carefully. "Well," she said. "Only one thing to do."

"That's right," said Arthur. "You want to or me?"

"I'll," said Rhoda, stepping to the gas range.

"Careful, dear," cautioned Arthur. "Don't burn yourself."

"No, darling," said his wife. She turned on the gas jet nearest her. The automatic monitor ignited the burner and Rhoda held a corner of the paper over it. She turned the jet off as the paper began to burn, neatly. Holding it before her she crossed the kitchen to the sink and joined her husband. Now she carefully placed the flaming handful in the sink. They both stood there, watching the paper turn to ash. Arthur put his arm around his wife, tenderly.

"It's not like he couldn't spare it," he said.

"An' anyways," added Rhoda, "why cheat family and friends from paying proper last respects?"

"—crossed my mind, too," said Arthur.

"Furthermore, he had no right to do what he did."

"None whatsoever," agreed Arthur. "A man legally dead, after all."

"You know where we're gonna sit tonight?" asked Rhoda.

"Loges."

"Yes. Costly, but smoking."

In the sink, the flame died. Rhoda slapped at the black ash, lightly, with her forefinger. Arthur turned on the faucet. Suddenly the sink was clear.

The undertaker and his wife washed their hands together and went to the movies. They arrived in time to see not only the newsreel and the cartoon, but Coming Attractions as well.



# ANYTHING BOX

by Zenna Henderson

It is difficult to *think about* a Zenna Henderson story. When I pick it up and turn the pages to refresh my memory, the warm feeling comes back to me so strongly that it is next to impossible to remember that it is hunger she is writing about: the urgent crying hunger of human loneliness.

Most frequently, as here, she writes about children; a child struggling against society's insistence that as the skullbones harden, the soul must be locked inside, alone. In the hands of another writer, these could be ugly stories; but I saved this one for the last, because it left me feeling so good. . . .

I SUPPOSE it was about the second week of school that I noticed Sue-lynn particularly. Of course, I'd noticed her name before and checked her out automatically for maturity and ability and probable performance the way most teachers do with their students during the first weeks of school. She had checked out mature and capable and no worry as to performance as I had pigeonholed her—setting aside for the moment the little nudge that said, “Too quiet”—with my other no-worries until the fluster and flurry of the first days had died down a little.

I remember my noticing day. I had collapsed into my chair for a brief respite from guiding hot little hands through the intricacies of keeping a crayola within reasonable bounds and the room was full of the relaxed, happy hum of a pleased class as they worked away, not realizing that they were rubbing “blue” into their memories as well as onto their papers. I was meditating on how individual personalities were beginning to emerge among the 35 or so heterogeneous first



graders I had, when I noticed Sue-lynn—really noticed her—for the first time.

She had finished her paper—far ahead of the others as usual—and was sitting at her table facing me. She had her thumbs touching in front of her on the table and her fingers curving as though they held something between them—something large enough to keep her fingertips apart and angular enough to bend her fingers as if for corners. It was something pleasant that she held—pleasant and precious. You could tell that by the softness of her hold. She was leaning forward a little, her lower ribs pressed against the table, and she was looking, completely absorbed, at the table between her hands. Her face was relaxed and happy. Her mouth curved in a tender half-smile, and as I watched, her lashes lifted and she looked at me with a warm share-the-pleasure look. Then her eyes blinked and the shutters came down inside them. Her hand flicked into the desk and out. She pressed her thumbs to her forefingers and rubbed them slowly together. Then she laid one hand over the other on the table and looked down at them with the air of complete denial and ignorance children can assume so devastatingly.

The incident caught my fancy and I began to notice Sue-lynn. As I consciously watched her, I saw that she spent most of her free time staring at the table between her hands, much too unobtrusively to catch my busy attention. She hurried through even the fun-est of fun papers and then lost herself in looking. When Davie pushed her down at recess, and blood streamed from her knee to her ankle, she took her bandages and her tear-smudged face to that comfort she had so readily—if you'll pardon the expression—at hand, and emerged minutes later, serene and dry-eyed. I think Davie pushed her down because of her Looking. I know the day before he had come up to me, red-faced and squirming.

"Teacher," he blurted. "She Looks!"

"Who looks?" I asked absently, checking the vocabulary list in my book, wondering how on earth I'd missed *where*, one of those annoying *wh* words that throw the children for a loss.

"Sue-lynn. She Looks and Looks!"



"At you?" I asked.

"Well . . ." He rubbed a forefinger below his nose, leaving a clean streak on his upper lip, accepted the proffered Kleenex and put it in his pocket. "She looks at her desk and tells lies. She says she can see . . ."

"Can see what?" My curiosity picked up its ears.

"Anything," said Davie. "It's her Anything Box. She can see anything she wants to."

"Does it hurt you for her to Look?"

"Well," he squirmed. Then he burst out: "She says she saw me with a dog biting me because I took her pencil—she said." He started a pellmell verbal retreat. "She *thinks* I took her pencil. I only found—" His eyes dropped. "I'll give it back."

"I hope so," I smiled. "If you don't want her to look at you, then don't do things like that."

"Durn girls," he muttered and clomped back to his seat.

So I think he pushed her down the next day to get back at her for the dog-bite.

Several times after that I wandered to the back of the room, casually in her vicinity, but always she either saw or felt me coming and the quick sketch of her hand disposed of the evidence. Only once I thought I caught a glimmer of something—but her thumb and forefinger brushed in sunlight, and it must have been just that.

Children don't retreat for no reason at all, and, though Sue-lynn did not follow any overt pattern of withdrawal, I started to wonder about her. I watched her on the playground, to see how she tracked there. That only confused me more.

She had a very regular pattern. When the avalanche of children first descended at recess, she avalanched along with them and nothing in the shrieking, running, dodging mass resolved itself into a withdrawn Sue-lynn. But after ten minutes or so, she emerged from the crowd, tousle-haired, rosy-cheeked, smutched with dust, one shoelace dangling and, through some alchemy that I coveted for myself, she suddenly became untousled, undusty and unsmutched. And



there she was, serene and composed on the narrow little step at the side of the flight of stairs just where they disappeared into the base of the pseudo-Corinthian column that graced Our Door and her cupped hands received whatever they received and her absorption in what she saw became so complete that the bell came as a shock every time.

And each time, before she joined the rush to Our Door, her hand would sketch a gesture to her pocket, if she had one, or to the tiny ledge that extended between the hedge and the building. Apparently she always had to put the Anything Box away, but never had to go back to get it.

I was so intrigued by her putting whatever it was on the ledge that once I actually went over and felt along the grimy little outset. I sheepishly followed my children into the hall, wiping the dust from my fingertips, and Sue-lynn's eyes brimmed amusement at me without her mouth's smiling. Her hands mischievously squared in front of her and her thumbs caressed a solidness as the line of children swept into the room.

I smiled too because she was so pleased with having outwitted me. This seemed to be such a gay withdrawal that I let my worry die down. Better this manifestation than any number of other ones that I could name.

Some day, perhaps, I'll learn to keep my mouth shut. I wish I had before that long afternoon when we primary teachers worked together in a heavy cloud of ditto fumes, the acrid smell of India ink, drifting cigarette smoke and the constant current of chatter, and I let Alpha get me started on what to do with our behavior problems. She was all raunched up about the usual rowdy loudness of her boys and the eternal clack of her girls, and I—bless my stupidity—gave her Sue-lynn as an example of what should be our deepest concern rather than the outbursts from our active ones.

"You mean she just sits and looks at nothing?" Alpha's voice grated into her questioning tone.

"Well, I can't see anything," I admitted. "But apparently she can."

"But that's having hallucinations!" Her voice went up a



notch. "I read a book once—"

"Yes." Marlene leaned across the desk to flick ashes into the ash tray. "So we have heard and heard and heard."

"Well!" sniffed Alpha. "It's better than *never* reading a book."

"We're waiting," Marlene leaked smoke from her nostrils, "for the day when you read another book. This one must have been uncommonly long."

"Oh, I don't know." Alpha's forehead wrinkled with concentration. "It was only about—" Then she reddened and turned her face angrily away from Marlene.

"Apropos of *our* discussion—" she said pointedly. "It sounds to me like that child has a deep personality disturbance. Maybe even a psychotic—whatever—" Her eyes glistened faintly as she turned the thought over.

"Oh, I don't know," I said, surprised into echoing her words at my sudden need to defend Sue-lynn. "There's something about her. She doesn't have that apprehensive, hunched-shoulder, don't-hit-me-again air about her that so many withdrawn children have." And I thought achingly of one of mine from last year that Alpha had now and was verbally bludgeoning back into silence after all my work with him. "She seems to have a happy, adjusted personality, only with this odd little . . . *plus*."

"Well, I'd be worried if she were mine," said Alpha. "I'm glad all my kids are so normal." She sighed complacently. "I guess I really haven't anything to kick about. I seldom ever have problem children except wigglers and yakkers, and a holler and a smack can straighten them out."

Marlene caught my eye mockingly, tallying Alpha's class with me, and I turned away with a sigh. To be so happy—well, I suppose ignorance does help.

"You'd better do something about that girl," Alpha shrilled as she left the room. "She'll probably get worse and worse as time goes on. Deteriorating, I think the book said."

I had known Alpha a long time and I thought I knew how much of her talk to discount, but I began to worry about Sue-lynn. Maybe this *was* a disturbance that was more fundamental than the usual run-of-the-mill that I had met up



with. Maybe a child *can* smile a soft, contented smile and still have little maggots of madness flourishing somewhere inside.

Or, by gorry! I said to myself defiantly, maybe she *does* have an Anything Box. Maybe she *is* looking at something precious. Who am I to say no to anything like that?

An Anything Box! What could you see in an Anything Box? Heart's desire? I felt my own heart lurch—just a little—the next time Sue-lynn's hands curved. I breathed deeply to hold me in my chair. If it was *her* Anything Box, I wouldn't be able to see my heart's desire in it. Or would I? I propped my cheek up on my hand and doodled aimlessly on my time-schedule sheet. How on earth, I wondered—not for the first time—do I manage to get myself off on these tangents?

Then I felt a small presence at my elbow and turned to meet Sue-lynn's wide eyes.

"Teacher?" The word was hardly more than a breath.

"Yes?" I could tell that for some reason Sue-lynn was loving me dearly at the moment. Maybe because her group had gone into new books that morning. Maybe because I had noticed her new dress, the ruffles of which made her feel very feminine and lovable, or maybe just because the late autumn sun lay so golden across her desk. Anyway, she was loving me to overflowing, and since, unlike most of the children, she had no casual hugs or easy moist kisses, she was bringing her love to me in her encompassing hands.

"See my box, Teacher? It's my Anything Box."

"Oh, my!" I said. "May I hold it?"

After all, I have held—tenderly or apprehensively or bravely—tiger magic, live rattlesnakes, dragon's teeth, poor little dead butterflies and two ears and a nose that dropped off Sojie one cold morning—none of which I could see any more than I could the Anything Box. But I took the squareness from her carefully, my tenderness showing in my fingers and my face.

And I received weight and substance and actuality!

Almost I let it slip out of my surprised fingers, but Sue-lynn's apprehensive breath helped me catch it and I curved



my fingers around the precious warmth and looked down, down, past a faint shimmering, down into Sue-lynn's Anything Box.

*I was running barefoot through the whispering grass. The swirl of my skirts caught the daisies as I rounded the gnarled appletree at the corner. The warm wind lay along each of my cheeks and chuckled in my ears. My heart outstripped my flying feet and melted with a rush of delight into warmth as his arms—*

I closed my eyes and swallowed hard, my palms tight against the Anything Box. "It's beautiful!" I whispered. "It's wonderful, Sue-lynn. Where did you get it?"

Her hands took it back hastily. "It's mine," she said defiantly. "It's mine."

"Of course," I said. "Be careful now. Don't drop it."

She smiled faintly as she sketched a motion to her pocket. "I won't." She patted the pocket on her way back to her seat.

Next day she was afraid to look at me at first for fear I might say something or look something or in some way remind her of what must seem like a betrayal to her now, but after I only smiled my usual smile, with no added secret knowledge, she relaxed.

A night or so later when I leaned over my moon-drenched window sill and let the shadow of my hair hide my face from such ebullient glory, I remembered about the Anything Box. Could I make one for myself? Could I square off this aching waiting, this out-reaching, this silent cry inside me, and make it into an Anything Box? I freed my hands and brought them together thumb to thumb, framing a part of the horizon's darkness between my upright forefingers. I stared into the empty square until my eyes watered. I sighed, and laughed a little, and let my hands frame my face as I leaned out into the night. To have magic so near—to feel it tingle off my fingertips and then to be so bound that I couldn't receive it. I turned away from the window—turning my back on brightness.

It wasn't long after this that Alpha succeeded in putting sharp points of worry back in my thoughts of Sue-lynn. We had ground duty together, and one morning when we shiv-



ered while the kids ran themselves rosy in the crisp air, she sizzed in my ear.

"Which one is it? The abnormal one, I mean."

"I don't have any abnormal children," I said, my voice sharpening before the sentence ended because I suddenly realized whom she meant.

"Well, I call it abnormal to stare at nothing." You could almost taste the acid in her words. "Who is it?"

"Sue-lynn," I said reluctantly. "She's playing on the bars now."

Alpha surveyed the upside-down Sue-lynn whose brief skirts were belled down from her bare pink legs and half covered her face as she swung from one of the bars by her knees. Alpha clutched her wizened blue hands together and breathed on them. "She looks normal enough," she said.

"She *is* normal!" I snapped.

"*Well*, bite my head off!" cried Alpha. "You're the one that said she wasn't, not me—or is it 'not I'? I never could remember. Not me? Not I?"

The bell saved Alpha from a horrible end. I never knew a person so serenely unaware of essentials and so sensitive to trivia. But she had succeeded in making me worry about Sue-lynn again, and the worry exploded into distress a few days later.

Sue-lynn came to school sleepy-eyed and quiet. She didn't finish any of her work and she fell asleep during rest time. I cussed TV and Drive-Ins and assumed a night's sleep would put it right. But next day Sue-lynn burst into tears and slapped Davie clear off his chair.

"Why Sue-lynn!" I gathered Davie up in all his astonishment and took Sue-lynn's hand. She jerked it away from me and flung herself at Davie again. She got two handfuls of his hair and had him out of my grasp before I knew it. She threw him bodily against the wall with a flip of her hands, then doubled up her fists and pressed them to her streaming eyes. In the shocked silence of the room, she stumbled over to Isolation and, seating herself, back to the class, on the little chair, she leaned her head into the corner and sobbed quietly in big gulping sobs.



"What on earth goes on?" I asked the stupefied Davie who sat spraddle-legged on the floor fingering a detached tuft of hair. "What did you do?"

"I only said 'Robber Daughter,' " said Davie. "It said so in the paper. My mamma said her daddy's a robber. They put him in jail cause he robbed a gas station." His bewildered face was trying to decide whether or not to cry. Everything had happened so fast that he didn't know yet if he was hurt.

"It isn't nice to call names," I said weakly. "Get back into your seat. I'll take care of Sue-lynn later."

He got up and sat gingerly down in his chair, rubbing his ruffled hair, wanting to make more of a production of the situation but not knowing how. He twisted his face experimentally to see if he had tears available and had none.

"Durn girls," he muttered and tried to shake his fingers free of a wisp of hair.

I kept my eye on Sue-lynn for the next half hour as I busied myself with the class. Her sobs soon stopped and her rigid shoulders relaxed. Her hands were softly in her lap and I knew she was taking comfort from her Anything Box. We had our talk together later, but she was so completely sealed off from me by her misery that there was no communication between us. She sat quietly watching me as I talked, her hands trembling in her lap. It shakes the heart, somehow, to see the hands of a little child quiver like that.

That afternoon I looked up from my reading group, startled, as though by a cry, to catch Sue-lynn's frightened eyes. She looked around bewildered and then down at her hands again—her empty hands. Then she darted to the Isolation corner and reached under the chair. She went back to her seat slowly, her hands squared to an unseen weight. For the first time, apparently, she had had to go get the Anything Box. It troubled me with a vague unease for the rest of the afternoon.

Through the days that followed while the trial hung fire, I had Sue-lynn in attendance bodily, but that was all. She sank into her Anything Box at every opportunity. And always, if she had put it away somewhere, she had to go back



for it. She roused more and more reluctantly from these waking dreams, and there finally came a day when I had to shake her to waken her.

I went to her mother, but she couldn't or wouldn't understand me, and made me feel like a frivolous gossip-monger taking her mind away from her husband, despite the fact that I didn't even mention him—or maybe because I didn't mention him.

"If she's being a bad girl, spank her," she finally said, wearily shifting the weight of a whining baby from one hip to another and pushing her tousled hair off her forehead. "Whatever you do is all right by me. My worrier is all used up. I haven't got any left for the kids right now."

Well, Sue-lynn's father was found guilty and sentenced to the State Penitentiary and school was less than an hour old the next day when Davie came up, clumsily a-tiptoe, braving my wrath for interrupting a reading group, and whispered hoarsely, "Sue-lynn's asleep with her eyes open again, Teacher."

We went back to the table and Davie slid into his chair next to a completely unaware Sue-lynn. He poked her with a warning finger. "I told you I'd tell on you."

And before our horrified eyes, she toppled, as rigidly as a doll, sideways off the chair. The thud of her landing relaxed her and she lay limp on the green asphalt tile—a thin paper-doll of a girl, one hand still clenched open around something. I pried her fingers loose and almost wept to feel enchantment dissolve under my heavy touch. I carried her down to the nurse's room and we worked over her with wet towels and prayer and she finally opened her eyes.

"Teacher," she whispered weakly.

"Yes, Sue-lynn." I took her cold hands in mine.

"Teacher, I almost got in my Anything Box."

"No," I answered. "You couldn't. You're too big."

"Daddy's there," she said. "And where we used to live."

I took a long, long look at her wan face. I hope it was genuine concern for her that prompted my next words. I hope it wasn't envy or the memory of the niggling nagging of Alpha's voice that put firmness in my voice as I went on.



"That's play-like," I said. "Just for fun."

Her hands jerked protestingly in mine. "Your Anything Box is just for fun. It's like Davie's cowpony that he keeps in his desk or Sojie's jet plane, or when the big bear chases all of you at recess. It's fun-for-play, but it's not for real. You mustn't think it's for real. It's only play."

"No!" she denied. "*No!*" she cried frantically and, hunching herself up on the cot, peering through her tear-swollen eyes, she scrabbled under the pillow and down beneath the rough blanket that covered her.

"Where is it?" she cried. "Where is it? Give it back to me, Teacher!"

She flung herself toward me and pulled open both my clenched hands.

"Where did you put it? Where did you put it?"

"There is no Anything Box," I said flatly, trying to hold her to me and feeling my heart breaking along with hers.

"You took it!" she sobbed. "You took it away from me!" And she wrenched herself out of my arms.

"Can't you give it back to her?" whispered the nurse. "If it makes her feel so bad? Whatever it is—"

"It's just imagination," I said, almost sullenly. "I can't give her back something that doesn't exist."

Too young! I thought bitterly. Too young to learn that heart's desire is only play-like.

Of course the doctor found nothing wrong. Her mother dismissed the matter as a fainting spell and Sue-lynn came back to class next day, thin and listless, staring blankly out the window, her hands palm down on the desk. I swore by the pale hollow of her cheek that never, *never* again would I take any belief from anyone without replacing it with something better. What had I given Sue-lynn? What had she better than I had taken from her? How did I know but that her Anything Box was on purpose to tide her over rough spots in her life like this? And what now, now that I had taken it from her?

Well, after a time she began to work again, and later, to play. She came back to smiles, but not to laughter. She put-



tered along quite satisfactorily except that she was a candle blown out. The flame was gone wherever the brightness of belief goes. And she had no more sharing smiles for me, no overflowing love to bring to me. And her shoulder shrugged subtly away from my touch.

Then one day I suddenly realized that Sue-lynn was searching our class room. Stealthily, casually, day by day she was searching, covering every inch of the room. She went through every puzzle box, every lump of clay, every shelf and cupboard, every box and bag. Methodically she checked behind every row of books and in every child's desk until finally, after almost a week, she had been through everything in the place except my desk. Then she began to materialize suddenly at my elbow every time I opened a drawer. And her eyes would probe quickly and sharply before I slid it shut again. But if I tried to intercept her looks, they slid away and she had some legitimate errand that had brought her up to the vicinity of the desk.

She believes it again, I thought hopefully. She won't accept the fact that her Anything Box is gone. She wants it again.

But it *is* gone, I thought drearily. It's really-for-true gone.

My head was heavy from troubled sleep, and sorrow was a weariness in all my movements. Waiting is sometimes a burden almost too heavy to carry. While my children hummed happily over their fun-stuff, I brooded silently out the window until I managed a laugh at myself. It was a shaky laugh that threatened to dissolve into something else, so I brisked back to my desk.

As good a time as any to throw out useless things, I thought, and to see if I can find that colored chalk I put away so carefully. I plunged my hands into the wilderness of the bottom right-hand drawer of my desk. It was deep with a huge accumulation of anything—just anything—that might need a temporary hiding place. I knelt to pull out left-over Jack Frost pictures, and a broken bean shooter, a chewed red ribbon, a roll of cap-gun ammunition, one striped sock, six Numbers papers, a rubber dagger, a copy of *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, a miniature coal shovel, patterns for



jack-o'-lanterns, and a pink plastic pelican. I retrieved my Irish linen hankie I thought lost forever and Sojie's report card that he had told me solemnly had blown out of his hand and landed on a jet and broke the sound barrier so loud that it busted all to flitters. Under the welter of miscellany, I felt a squareness. Oh, happy! I thought, this is where I put the colored chalk! I cascaded papers off both sides of my lifting hands and shook the box free.

*We were together again. Outside, the world was an enchanting wilderness of white, the wind shouting softly through the windows, tapping wet, white fingers against the warm light. Inside all the worry and waiting, the apartness and loneliness were over and forgotten, their hugeness dwindled by the comfort of a shoulder, the warmth of clasping hands—and nowhere, nowhere was the fear of parting, nowhere the need to do without again. This was the happy ending. This was—*

This was Sue-lynn's Anything Box!

My racing heart slowed as the dream faded . . . and rushed again at the realization. I had it here! In my junk drawer! It had been here all the time!

I stood up shakily, concealing the invisible box in the flare of my skirts. I sat down and put the box carefully in the center of my desk, covering the top of it with my palms lest I should drown again in delight. I looked at Sue-lynn. She was finishing her fun paper, competently but unjoyously. Now would come her patient sitting with quiet hands until told to do something else.

Alpha would approve. And very possibly, I thought, Alpha would, for once in her limited life, be right. We may need "hallucinations" to keep us going—all of us but the Alphas—but when we go so far as to try to force ourselves, physically, into the Neverneverland of heart's desire . . .

I remembered Sue-lynn's thin rigid body toppling doll-like off its chair. Out of her deep need she had found—or created? Who could tell?—something too dangerous for a child. I could so easily bring the brimming happiness back to her eyes—but at what a possible price!

No, I had a duty to protect Sue-lynn. Only maturity—the



maturity born of the sorrow and loneliness that Sue-lynn was only beginning to know—could be trusted to use an Anything Box safely and wisely.

My heart thudded as I began to move my hands, letting the palms slip down from the top to shape the sides of—

I had moved them back again before I really saw, and I have now learned almost to forget that glimpse of what heart's desire is like when won at the cost of another's heart.

I sat there at the desk trembling and breathless, my palms moist, feeling as if I had been on a long journey away from the little schoolroom. Perhaps I had. Perhaps I had been shown all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

"Sue-lynn," I called. "Will you come up here when you're through?"

She nodded unsmilingly and snipped off the last paper from the edge of Mistress Mary's dress. Without another look at her handiwork, she carried the scissors safely to the scissors box, crumpled the scraps of paper in her hand and came up to the waste basket by the desk.

"I have something for you, Sue-lynn," I said, uncovering the box.

Her eyes dropped to the desk top. She looked indifferently up at me. "I did my fun paper already."

"Did you like it?"

"Yes." It was a flat lie.

"Good," I lied right back. "But look here." I squared my hands around the Anything Box.

She took a deep breath and the whole of her little body stiffened.

"I found it," I said hastily, fearing anger. "I found it in the bottom drawer."

She leaned her chest against my desk, her hands caught tightly between, her eyes intent on the box, her face white with the aching want you see on children's faces pressed to Christmas windows.

"Can I have it?" she whispered.

"It's yours," I said, holding it out.

Still she leaned against her hands, her eyes searching my face. "Can I have it?" she asked again.



"Yes!" I was impatient with this anticlimax. "But—"

Her eyes flickered. She had sensed my reservation before I had. "But you must never try to get into it again."

"OK," she said, the word coming out on a long relieved sigh. "OK, Teacher."

She took the box and tucked it lovingly into her small pocket. She turned from the desk and started back to her table. My mouth quirked with a small smile. It seemed to me that everything about her had suddenly turned upward—even the ends of her straight taffy-colored hair. The subtle flame about her that made her Sue-lynn was there again. She scarcely touched the floor as she walked.

I sighed heavily and traced on the desk top with my finger a probable size for an Anything Box. What would Sue-lynn choose to see first? How like a drink after a drought it would seem to her.

I was startled as a small figure materialized at my elbow. It was Sue-lynn, her fingers carefully squared before her.

"Teacher," she said softly, all the flat emptiness gone from her voice. "Any time you want to take my Anything Box, you just say so."

I groped through my astonishment and incredulity for words. She couldn't possibly have had time to look into the Box yet.

"Why, thank you, Sue-lynn," I managed. "Thanks a lot. I would like very much to borrow it some time."

"Would you like it now?" she asked, proffering it.

"No, thank you," I said, around the lump in my throat. "I've had a turn already. You go ahead."

"OK," she murmured. Then—"Teacher?"

"Yes?"

Shyly she leaned against me, her cheek on my shoulder. She looked up at me with her warm, unshuttered eyes, then both arms were suddenly around my neck in a brief awkward embrace.

"Watch out!" I whispered laughing into the collar of her blue dress. "You'll lose it again!"

"No I won't," she laughed back, patting the flat pocket of her dress. "Not ever, ever again!"



## THE YEAR'S S-F

### A Summation by the Editor

IT SURPRISES ME every time.

For months I read stories, weed out the better ones, re-read, re-weed, and read and weed again; at the last minute, there is always a dreadful jumble of twice as much as I can use, and all but the *very* best of it already gone over so often that all powers of discrimination are exhausted. I stew and worry and groan; and somewhere along the way I discover the *shape* of a book.

That's the part that always surprises me. It is clear from the start (my contract *insists* on it) that there will be a book; but right up to the end it seems it will be merely a book full of stories—good ones, perhaps, but without that increment in virtue that appropriate grouping ought to produce. When one and one add up to only two, the combination is sterile.

It was particularly interesting this time, when the pattern of the collection began to emerge, to see how different it was from just a year ago.

Last year the major preoccupation of the better writers in science-fantasy was with the relationship between man and his environment, and especially between people and their machines. This year the emphasis is on interpersonal relations, and particularly on the problems of communication.

More than half the final selections for this volume deal thematically with some aspect of communication. Again and again the statement emerges: *We do not know each other. We do not understand each other.* And from there they go off in all different directions. Would it really help if we *did*? How can we find out? Is there a better way than words? *What* better way? Or can we *make* words do the job?

Of the remaining stories, half again are concerned with



*self*-understanding, and should perhaps be included therefore in the tally above. Communication is a process commencing within the mind of one person, and terminating inside the mind of another; it is only the means—the *technology*—of communication that bridges the gap between organisms.

Last year the stories showed such a pronounced paranoid streak that I made several hasty changes at the last moment, to avoid the irksome effect of story after story in which a persecuted protagonist stood alone against a hostile world. This year, it was split-personalities; I had to weed out at the end. (But there are plenty left. "The Far Look" and "Stranger Station," for instance, are more subtle about it than "The Other Man" or "Anything Box"; but the possession of two bodies instead of one is irrelevant, if two must function as a single organism to survive.)

Oddly in keeping with this trend, the year was in many ways one of reappraisal and self-examination within the professional ranks. Writers and publishers alike shifted cautiously from the bottom-of-the-trough gloom of 1955 toward a wary, but determined, optimism. A year ago, a good many editors were flatly refusing even to consider s-f submissions; and some of the best writers were leaving the field for greener (and more edible) grasses. Today the general attitude appears to be rather: *We made mistakes before. If we do it right this time, perhaps we can sell it after all.*

Certainly the year's literary history established that there is a reading public, and a big one, for the subject-matter of science-fantasy. Bridey Murphy alone would have been enough to prove that. (And a good thing, too; the poor girl had to prove *something*!) In any case, as 1957 starts, there are six new s-f magazines on the stands (though most of them appeared too late to be included in my reading for this book); and among those I have seen so far, I'd guess that three at least—*Satellite*, *Science Fiction Adventures*, and, most notably, *Venture*—will probably survive. In addition, I know of at least three book publishers who have once again started looking actively for science-fiction novels.

It was a critical year, in the sense that the field as a com-



mercial whole hit the bottom of the pit and started scraping its way up the sides again. But it was also a critical year in at least two other senses of the word.

Story content was one. With the increasing pressure of the socio-political environment for conformity in all things, fantasy has begun to resume its traditional importance as a medium for expression of social criticism and individualist views. Writers are returning to the field, and new writers are being attracted to it because it provides an outlet for much that cannot now be said (except to perhaps fifty or a hundred readers at a time, in the *littlest* magazines) in other areas of fiction writing. Meanwhile, a big new market has been opened up for s-f (and especially for satirical s-f) by *Playboy* and by the many other men's-interest magazines that have sprung up in the wake of the *Playboy* success.

Finally, 1956 was a year of criticism, in the best possible sense. With all due respect to publications that have from time to time offered up evaluations and analyses of the science-fiction "phenomenon," this year was marked, in my opinion, by the emergence of the most serious and competent literary criticism the field has known.

Two separate (or almost separate) events contributed to this achievement. One was the publication of a book devoted exclusively to serious criticism of the s-f field, written by a man who, as author, TV script-writer, illustrator, agent, editor, *and* critic, has been professionally engaged in science-fantasy for more than fifteen years. The book, *In Search of Wonder* (Advent), by Damon Knight, covers ten years, roughly, of active book publishing, and is as keenly and constructively critical as anything ever written about the field. Knight knows *what* is good and bad, and *why*.

The other big accomplishment of the year, from the writers' viewpoint, was the establishment of the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference. This was the first fully professional conference ever held among s-f writers, and the enthusiasm it generated even in advance was perhaps also associated with the feeling expressed so strongly in the new stories—the urgent need for communication. Its effects will show up at longer range, and will be sustained, I think,



by a new critical journal now being published as a by-product of those discussions.

On the surface, 1956 was a poor year in many ways. To come back to the communication definition: the year gave clear evidence of a waiting readership on the receiving end; it was nothing less than spectacular for its accomplishments in self-examination and clarification of objectives on the creative end; but the gap between the two is yet to be adequately bridged. The commercial publishing market, while showing signs of improved interest, has not yet discovered the most successful techniques for conveying this highly specialized kind of communication from writer to reader (with profit to all). Perhaps the accomplishment of this goal will be the substance of next year's report.

Inevitably, in compiling a book of this sort, one is left with a stack of stories that *would* have made it *if*—if they were shorter, if they were less like something already included, if rights had been available, etc.

A listing of these is included in the pages following this summation. But before passing on to them, I want to express my thanks here to the many persons whose co-operation and assistance make an undertaking of this sort possible: to the editors of more magazines than I have space to list, for supplying me with information and with copies of stories; to those two untiring mailers of cross-continental postcards, Anthony Boucher and Forrest J. Ackerman, for their many suggestions and reminders; to Damon Knight, Fritz Leiber, and Robert P. Mills, for their opinions on stories; and to all those incautious souls who may have found themselves on my premises when an opinion was wanted—and was *gotten*; to Mrs. Marjorie Smith, of Milford, and my daughter, Merrill Zissman, for assistance with the sometimes overwhelming clerical work; to both my daughters, Merrill and Ann, for their rather incredible patience; and to Knox Burger of Western Printing, for his incredible patience *and* fortitude.

Judith Merril  
Milford, Penna.  
January, 1957



## HONORABLE MENTION

### ABBREVIATIONS

ASF	<i>Astounding Science Fiction</i>
Auth.	<i>Authentic Science Fiction</i>
FU	<i>Fantastic Universe</i>
F&SF	<i>Fantasy and Science Fiction</i>
GSF	<i>Galaxy Science Fiction</i>
ISF	<i>Infinity Science Fiction</i>
SFS	<i>Science Fiction Stories</i>
PLB	<i>Playboy</i>
S-Fan.	<i>Science Fantasy</i>
"F&SF:6"	"The Best From Fantasy and Science Fiction: Sixth Series," (anthology) ed.: A. Boucher; Doubleday

ROBERT ABERNATHY	"Hour Without Glory," <i>F&amp;SF</i> , 7/56; "The Year 2000," <i>F&amp;SF</i> , 1/56.
BRIAN W. ALDISS	"Psychlops," <i>New Worlds</i> , 7/56.
STEVE ALLEN	"The Secret," <i>Colliers</i> , 9/28/56.
POUL ANDERSON	"The Live Coward," <i>ASF</i> , 6/56; "The Man Who Came Early" in "F&SF:6"
ISAAC ASIMOV	"The Dead Past," <i>ASF</i> , 4/56.
RAYMOND BANKS	"The Instigators," <i>SFS</i> , 1/56.
JACKSON BARROW	"The Little Giant," <i>S. F. Quarterly</i> , 11/56.
CHARLES BEAUMONT	"The Dark Music," <i>PLB</i> , 12/56; "Träu- meri," <i>ISF</i> , 2/56.
JAMES BLISH	"Time to Survive," <i>F&amp;SF</i> , 2/56; "The Writing of the Rat," <i>GSF</i> , 7/56.
ROBERT BLOCH	"I Like Blondes," <i>PLB</i> , 1/56.
RAY BRADBURY	"Next Stop, the Stars," <i>Maclean's</i> 10/27/56.



- R. BRETNOR "The Past and Its Dead People," *F&SF*, 9/56.
- JOHN BRUNNER "By the Name of Man," *Nebula*, #17.
- ALGIS BUDRYS "The Mechanical Man," *FU*, 6/56;  
"The Peasant Girl," *ASF*, 6/56; "With  
A Dime on Top of It," *SFS*, 5/56.
- FRANK BUTLER "To the Wilderness I Wander," *Hudson Review*, Spring/56.
- PAUL A. CARTER "Unbalanced Equation," *F&SF*, 1/56.
- ARTHUR C. CLARKE "Venture to the Moon," *F&SF*, 12/56.
- MARK CLIFTON "Clerical Error," "Best S.F. Stories and  
Novels," ed.: Dikty (Fell).
- MILDRED CLINGERMAN "First Lesson," *Colliers*, 6/22/56.
- THEODORE R. COGSWELL "Impact With the Devil," *F&SF*, 11/56.
- CHESTER COHEN "Round-Up Time," *ISF*, 6/56.
- AVRAM DAVIDSON "King's Evil," in "F&SF:6."
- L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP "Internal Combustion," *ISF*, 2/56.
- MIRIAM ALLEN DE FORD "The Margenes," *If*, 2/56.
- PHILIP K. DICK "Pay for the Printer," *Satellite*, 10/56.
- GORDON R. DICKSON "Flat Tiger," *GSF*, 3/56.
- ADRIAN CONAN DOYLE "The Lover of the Coral Glades," *PLB*,  
11/56.
- HARLAN ELLISON "The Crackpots," *If*, 6/56.
- CHARLES L. FONTENAY "The Silk and the Song," in "F&SF:6."
- DANIEL F. GALOUYE "The Pliable," *F&SF*, 5/56.
- RANDALL GARRETT "Stroke of Genius," *ISF*, 8/56; "Suite  
Mentale," *Future*, #30.
- CHRISTOPHER GRIMM "Body Guard," *GSF*, 1/56.
- JAMES E. GUNN "Witches Must Burn," *ASF*, 8/56.
- RICHARD HARPER "The Pugilist," *Nugget*, 7/56.
- ROBERT A. HART "The Automatic Gentleman," *Dude*,  
8/56.
- FRANK HERBERT "The Nothing," *FU*, 1/56.
- SHIRLEY JACKSON "A Little Magic," *Woman's Home  
Comp.*, 1/56.
- RAYMOND F. JONES "The Non-Statistical Man," *SFS*, 5/56.
- CALVIN KENTFIELD "The Angel and the Sailor," *Harper's  
Bazaar*, 9/56.



HENRY KUTTNER &  
C. L. MOORE  
VARLEY LANG  
MURRAY LEINSTER  
MADELEINE L'ENGLE  
RICHARD MATHESON  
WINONA MCCLINTIC

JAMES MCCONNELL  
J. T. MCINTOSH  
IB MELCHIOR  
WALTER M. MILLER, JR.  
WARD MOORE  
ALAN E. NOURSE  
CHAD OLIVER

ARTHUR PORGES  
ROBERT PRESSLIE  
FRANK RILEY

JACK RITCHIE  
MARY-CARTER ROBERTS

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

MARGARET ST. CLAIR  
THOMAS N. SCORTIA

MICHAEL SHAARA  
LEN SHAW  
ROBERT SHECKLEY

ROBERT SILVERBERG  
CLIFFORD SIMAK  
HENRY SLESAR  
HENRY STILL  
THEODORE STURGEON

"Rite of Passage," *F&SF*, 5/56.  
"Thereby Hangs," *ASF*, 5/56.  
"Exploration Team," *ASF*, 3/56.  
"Poor Little Saturday," *FU*, 10/56.  
"A Flourish of Strumpets," *PLB*, 11/56.  
"A Heart of Furious Fancies," *Atlantic*, 11/56.  
"Avoidance Situation," *If*, 2/56.  
"Empath," *New Worlds*, 8/56.  
"The Racer," *Escapade*, 10/56.  
"And the Light Is Risen," *F&SF*, 8/56.  
"No Man Pursueth," in "F&SF:6."  
"Second Sight," *FU*, 4/56.  
"North Wind," *F&SF*, 3/56; "Let Me Live in a House," *Auth.*, 6/56.  
"Masterpiece," *Escapade*, 9/56.  
"Creep," *Auth.*, 1/56.  
"The Executioner," *If*, 4/56; "Project Hi-Psi," *If*, 8/56.  
"Sim," *Sir*, 8/56.  
"When Jack Smith Fought Old Satan," *Colliers*, 12/7/56.  
"Top Secret," *ASF*, 8/56; "Legwork," *ASF*, 4/56.  
"Horror Howce," *GSF*, 7/56.  
"Sea Change," in "Best S.F. Stories and Novels," ed.: Dikty (Fell).  
"Conquest Over Time," *FU*, 11/56.  
"Syllabus," *S-Fan.*, #17.  
"Disposal Service," *Bluebook*, 1/56;  
"Mountain Without a Name," in "Citizen in Space," (Ballantine).  
"Guest Rites," *ISF*, 2/56.  
"Honorable Opponent," *GSF*, 8/56.  
"Messenger," *FU*, 10/56.  
"Sales Resistance," *If*, 8/56.  
"And Now the News . . ." in "F&SF:6";  
"Fear Is a Business," *F&SF*, 8/56.



- WILLIAM TENN "Of All Possible Worlds," *GSF*, 12/56;  
"Wednesday's Child," *FU*, 1/56.
- JAMES THURBER (everything in) "Further Fables for  
Our Time," (Simon and Schuster).
- E. C. TUBB "Into the Empty Dark," *Nebula*, #17.
- HELEN URBAN "The Finer Breed," *F&SF*, 3/56.
- WALTER WAGER "The Second Mrs. Gilbert," *Swank*,  
8/56.
- F. L. WALLACE "A Little Thing for the House," *ASF*,  
7/56.
- JAY WILLIAMS "The Asa Rule," in "F&SF:6."
- ROBERT MOORE  
WILLIAMS "Sudden Lake," *Other Worlds*, 4/56.
- ANTHONY G.  
WILLIAMSON "To Reach the Stars," *Auth.*, 5/56.
- RICHARD WILSON "The Big Fix," *ISF*, 8/56; "Lonely  
Road," *F&SF*, 9/56.
- HERMAN WOUK "The 'Lomokome' Papers," *Colliers*,  
2/17/56.



Again . . .

# THE YEARS' GREATEST

Robert A. Heinlein

Isaac Asimov

J. G. Ballard

R. Bretnor

Algis Budrys

John Bernard Daley

Randall Garrett

Zenna Henderson

Garson Kanin

Damon Knight

C. M. Kornbluth

E. L. Malpass

Robert Nathan

Mack Reynolds

Ray Russell

Theodore Sturgeon

Theodore L. Thomas

Roger Thorne

